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# fantastic

## ADVENTURES

VOLUME 3  
NUMBER 8  
FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

AUGUST  
1941



**THE RETURN OF CIRCE** *by* NAT SCHACHNER

"I don't care how lucky you are,  
there's one *CHANCE* you  
*dare not* take!"

**B**EFORE I tell you what it is, let me say this: In twenty years of handling salesmen, it's the No. 1 Jonah, I know. Because I once took the chance myself . . . and lost. Let me give you the picture . . .

"For years we had been trying to get a crack at some of the immense and profitable Apex business—without success . . . couldn't even get in.

"Then one day Fate dumped me down in a coast-to-coast plane in a seat right alongside Apex's president.

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"I couldn't understand why then, and I never knew until a chance remark I overheard months afterward revealed what had irritated him. Know what it was? My breath. It killed my chances cold . . . just as it can kill so many other men's chances.

"So I am saying to you men, now, that your breath is one of the things you dare not gamble on as long as you're working for me.

"So here's an order: Before you make your calls, help put your breath on the more agreeable side with Listerine."



You, yourself, may not realize when you have halitosis (bad breath); that's the insidious thing about it. Unknowingly, you can offend the person you are most eager to impress. That's bad . . . in business and social life.

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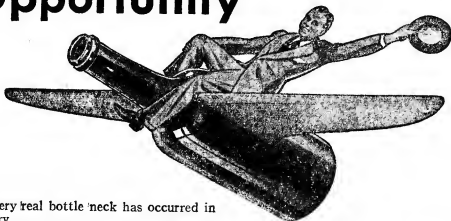
Some cases of bad breath are due to systemic conditions. But fortunately there is a delightful, easy precaution against halitosis due to the fermentation of food particles in the mouth, which some authorities regard as its major cause.

Simply rinse the mouth with full strength Listerine Antiseptic. It quickly halts such fermentation and then overcomes the odors fermentation causes. The breath becomes sweeter, purer, and less likely to offend. Your entire mouth feels fresher.

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There just are not enough men ready for these places nor can industry take the time to train them. Thousands—scores of thousands—must get their own training.

That is your opportunity—if you are ready or will get ready quickly. Never again will you have such an opportunity to command the success you want. But you must act decisively—immediately. The more quickly you get ready,

the sooner these millions of new workers will be pushing you up the ladder.

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Some of our training programs may cover just the field in which you see opportunity. Read them in the coupon below. Then check the one about which you wish full information—and mail the coupon today. Remember—the sooner you start, the sooner you will be ready for the opportunity.

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I'd like to get ready for one of these supervisory jobs. So please send me your free 48-page booklet on the field I have checked below—and full information about your training in that field.

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**VOL. 3**  
**NO. 6**

# ADVENTURES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

## STORIES

**THE RETURN OF CIRCE (Novel)** . . . . . by Nat Schachner . . . . . 8  
One by one Miss Kirke's admirers disappeared; and day by day her magnificent dog pack grew larger.

**PROBLEM ON MARS (Contest Short)** . . . . . by Duncan H. Farnsworth . . . . . 64  
A plague would overwhelm Earth and the last Martian would die—unless a simple question was answered.

**MR. MURCHISON'S GHOST (Short)** . . . . . by Robert Moore Williams . . . . . 74  
Mrs. Murchison was flying in the face of more than her husband's wrath when she bought this antique!

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FOR MEN only! When you've read this article, burn the magazine. Don't let HER get any ideas!

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FANTASTIC  
ADVENTURES  
AUGUST, 1941

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VOLUME 3  
NUMBER 6

# The Editor's Notebook

## A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

THE big news of this issue is undoubtedly the contest based on Duncan H. Farnsworth's fine story "Problem on Mars." The editors are giving three cash prizes to clever readers who can answer a very simple question. In fact, if you can't answer *that* question, you ought never to drive a car! Or play football. We can just imagine you going around left end—without interference! You'd be smeared plenty!

But just the same, on page 7 you'll find out what it's all about, and on page 64 you'll find the story, and on page 73 you'll find the rules.

SOMEbody made a liar out of us last month.

We told you about McCauley's fine Mac Girl that would be on this month's cover.

Well, we've looked, and it isn't there. Instead, there's a cover by Rod Ruth (who does our Romance Of The Elements series), and believe us or not, it all happened while we were on our vacation!

You never can tell, can you? But anyway, we hope you like this new artist.

QUITE a few of our readers have asked for some long stories, complete in one issue. Well, how about Nat Schachner's "The Return of Circé" in this issue? It's the longest piece we've had so far, and quite confidentially, we think you'll find it one of the best. It's the first of two fantasy yarns by Schachner, who comes back to us after quite a long absence.

ONCE in a while Robert Moore Williams sits down in a dark corner and cooks up a yarn that he sends to us with cryptic messages. Says he: "You won't buy this one, because I didn't write it for any market. I just like it, and I wrote it for fun."

Well, we fooled him. We bought it. And we like it too. And we think you will—even after

you discover that its fantasy basis is quite a screwy ghost who haunts a dressing cabinet. It's an odd, and delightful story, right in keeping with *Fantastic Adventures'* policy of "getting out of the usual groove."

WE mentioned before that we were on a vacation. We were. Went to New York, and to Washington. Met some of the writers who make you so happy each month. For instance—Eando Binder, and all his Little People; Manly Wade Wellman, who is fantasy's "biggest" author, and we do mean big! We met Henry Kuttner, and David V. Reed, and Joseph J. Millard, and Malcolm Jameson. We met authors, agents, artists, editors, and readers. All in all, we had a grand time. But we didn't meet that runaway Mac Girl! Maybe she eloped. Nor would we blame the guy!



"Doggone it. Now that I've got her in there, I've forgotten what I was going to do with her."

DON'T miss the special feature article by Jep Powell, in this issue. It's for our men readers only, though, so you ladies please steer clear. And that's an order! Or are we overestimating our authoritative power over you ladies? After reading Jep's disturbing bit, we are inclined to worry a little bit. Y'see, we remember something about how old lady Nature got the idea dinosaurs were passe—and we know

what happened to them! So lay off, ladies. This is personal, see?

THE draft is blowing on us pretty hard. Among the latest to go into 1A are Jack West, Henry Gade, Edwin Benson, H. W. McCauley (hey, *that's* where the Mac Girl went!), Alexander Blade, and Wallace Quitman. Ouch!

Threatened for the chopping block at an early date are David Wright O'Brien, William P. McGovern, Donald Bern, Arthur T. Harris, Julian S. Krupa, and Jay Jackson. Ouch again!

**S**WIFT AND COMPANY, the meat packers, are the latest to go into the fantasy business; they've just come through with a new hot dog tenderizing process. As Dave Vern used to say: "This'll kill you!" The frankfurters are dipped or sprayed in—of all things—pineapple juice!

That would sound fantastic even in this magazine!

Rich in protelytic enzymes, the juice reacts to soften the tissues of natural hot dog casings. Then comes the usual processing—smoking over hardwood fire in special ovens, cooking, cooling, and washing in sprays of water. The finished hound makes better eating than ever.

**I**N this new war, they've put hell on wings as well as on wheels. Contrasting sharply with World War I, airmen don't chase each other up and down the sky squirting machine-gun bullets around without bothering about when the supply runs out. A couple of good hard bursts, and it's gone. Boy, do they fling the hardware around now!

The British Spitfire, for example, has no less than eight machine guns, four in each wing. The converging cone of lead, which acts like a murderous buzz-saw in chopping Messerschmitts to pieces, at the same time is soon exhausted.

To warn the pilot that he's running low, engineers at General Electric have just invented an Ammunition Remaining indicator. It has four dials, two to register the supply of 30-caliber bullets, two for 50-caliber bullets. This "clock" is operated by electrical impulses. After one glance, the warbird knows whether to continue the fight, or beat it for home.

**R**EMEMBER "The Empress of Mars," "The Reflection That Lived," "The Vanishing Witnesses?" Ross Rocklynn wrote 'em, and good, too.

Well, here's an interesting incident that will tie up in a moment. Your editor took a train recently to Milwaukee, bound on a bowling trip. After winning, or was it losing, three games, he went back to the train to return to Chicago.

Waiting for the train, he saw a very lovely girl walk up to the newsstand and ask for a copy of *Fantastic Adventures*.

We are always pleased to meet our readers, so we spoke. She readily volunteered, with pride in her voice, that her brother wrote for this magazine. His name, she said, was Ross Rocklynn.

It's a small world. And during the trip to Chicago, your editor learned a lot about Ross that he'd blush to have us print. Big sister told on him in a big way—but fondly.

It's all right—we promised not to tell!

**Y**OU all liked "The Masterful Mind of Mortimer Meek" by William P. McGivern in our May issue, and you liked "Sidney, The Screwloose Robot," in our June Issue. So, here's a tip on some more good humor material by this popular

writer. He's collaborated with equally popular David Wright O'Brien in the August issue of *Amazing Stories* in "Mr. Muddle Does As He Pleases." You'd do yourself a good turn by dashing out right now and picking up a copy. Laughs! It's full of 'em—and how!

**I**NCIDENTALLY, the cover on that issue is a swell St. John, illustrating "Yellow Men Of Mars" by Edgar Rice Burroughs, a John Carter story. You oughtn't to miss that, either.

**A** READER writes in and asks, please, Mr. Editor, tell us more about what's coming in the future. Surely you must have something good up your sleeve?

Well, naturally we have. And we see no reason for not spilling a few beans. Only, if it puts you on pins and needles, don't blame us.

**O**NE of the best things we have on tap is a Don Wilcox story, novelet length, about an enchantress. It's not Circe, so don't begin to snort. It's a peach, and something new for Don. He's always springing something new.

Then there's an odd story by William P. McGivern called "Thunder Over Washington." He got the idea while sitting in the senate chamber, listening to Senator Pepper pepper the air with oratory.

Both of these will be in our October issue.

**A** NOTHER treat, as yet unscheduled, is a super-fine time travel yarn by John York Cabot. And still another is a lost-world story by Joseph J. Millard. And that's enough to reveal.

**O**NE of the questions that has puzzled astronomers for years has been the origin of the Star of Bethlehem. If it is not of supernatural origin, there are several answers that might explain its presence.

According to Kepler, the star in question was probably a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation Pisces, the two planets being so close as to seem a single star. This conjunction is recorded as having occurred about 7 B.C., and might possibly have coincided with the birth of Christ.

Another theory is that the star of Bethlehem was a recurrent star the last appearance of which was in 1572 when it appeared in Cassiopeia. This star is reported to occur every 300 years.

A third theory which has been advanced is that the star was Venus, which varies in brightness, but is the brightest of all heavenly bodies except the moon and the sun.

Your editor would tend to reject Kepler's theory, since the phenomenon of a star so important to the wise men as this, breaking up, or seeming to do so as Jupiter and Saturn parted company, would have been mentioned by them as a more amazing phenomenon than the brightness of the conjunction itself.

(Concluded on page 99)

# HOW CLEVER ARE YOU?

DO YOU KNOW YOUR RIGHT HAND FROM YOUR LEFT?  
IF YOU DO—

## THEN YOU CAN WIN \$50!

That sounds easy, doesn't it? Well, we aren't saying it is, and we aren't saying it isn't. It all depends on the circumstances. And in this contest we have a rather unusual set of circumstances. You'll find them all detailed in the paragraphs of a very fine little story by Duncan H. Farnsworth in this issue. You'll get a lot of fun out of reading the story, and, we think, a lot more fun answering the one simple question that arises from it. And we know you'll hop right to your feet to mail us your answer and win one of the three cash prizes the editors of this magazine are offering for the best answers.

### THE PRIZES

FIRST  
**\$50**

SECOND  
**\$10**

THIRD  
**\$5**

### TEN HONORABLE MENTIONS

Pretty nice prizes, aren't they? Well, we're waiting with check-book poised to pay you cash for your answer, if it is one of the best three, and we'll publish the names of ten more who top their competitors.

### A FEW HINTS

Maybe this isn't fair, but your editor, confidentially, wants to make this a cinch for his special friends. So those of you who rate that way—listen! All this takes place on Mars, and astronomy plays a great part in it. You might find an answer there. And you boys who know a little about physics; maybe you can "swing" something out of that! This Martian can "see," although the author hints that he's blind. But don't swallow that, literally. There are more ways of seeing than by Earthly eyesight! And geometrically—hey, there's a real tip! Given this, and given that, you can find. . . . Well, it's worth looking into, anyway. Be careful about assuming things, though. The Martian may not be built like us at all. We don't know that. And only an answer that is positive, with no chance of error, will win. Now if the Martian only had a dial phone—! Aw heck, that's enough. You figure it out from here—it's a cinch! Just read the story, and get your think tank working.

*Turn to page 64 for story*

## "Problem On Mars"

*By Duncan H. Farnsworth*

**WIN THAT \$50 FIRST PRIZE!**

**FOR RULES AND ENTRY BLANK SEE PAGE 73**



# The Return of CIRCE

by NAT SCHACHNER

GORDON KEIL, so Mrs. Jenkins, his housekeeper, testified later, seemed strangely drunk on his return home the night that he vanished.

"Drunk?" echoed Detective Strang, cocking his head to one side in surprise. "That's funny. I've been scouting around among his friends. There ain't but one thing they all agreed on; and that was that Keil never touched a drop in his life. Wouldn't even taste cider, for fear it might of somehow fermented. Now you go and say—"

Mrs. Jenkins pursed her thin lips in a hard, straight line.

"I know all that better'n you, mister. Once he caught me takin' a bit of a snifter in my own room—it's my stomach needs it; I gets queer spells like—anyhow, he almost fired me.

"But this here last night I'm telling you about, Mr. Keil acted drunk if I ever saw one. He just got out of the car an' walked right by me like he never saw me before, when I opens the door. His face was all flushed and there was a glitter in his eyes.

"I says to him nice and friendly: 'Did yer have a nice week-end out at Miss Kirke's?' But he sails by me like I was dirt under his feet. Me, what's babied him and put up with his nonsense this past ten years."

"Hmmm!" grunted Strang. He knew these hatchet-faced women. Give them a chance and they'd overwhelm you with words. "What'd he do next?"

"Went up to his room. Took the stairs three at a time, like he was a

**Once again the loveliest enchantress  
of all time casts her spell over men;  
and terror engulfs modern New York...**







K  
1941

Incredibly the slim whip held the maddened dogs at bay

boy, threw his hat sailing over the banister, and locked himself in." The housekeeper sniffed. "An' him with rheumatic twinges an' ulcers in his stomick an' hair that woulda be gray as a doormat if'n he didn't dye it once a month."

Strang disregarded the clinical details. Gordon Keil was the fifth man that had disappeared into thin air within the past month or so, and the Commish was pounding his neck for results.

"So that was the last you saw of him, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Wasn't it possible he went out again, and you didn't notice?"

She shook her withered head vigorously.

"He couldn't of. My room is downstairs next to the door. It was pretty hot, so I had the door open. I'd of seen him."

Strang scratched his nose.

"But damn it, there's no other way out. The upstairs windows are all barred with steel gratings. You say you went up to his room about an hour later?"

"Yes, sir. I always do afore goin' to bed. Sometimes he takes a glass o' buttermilk for his stomick afore he goes to sleep."

"And the door was open, that he had shut when he went in?"

"Not only that, but he was gone. I searched everywhere — bathroom, the guest chambers, everywhere. Nary hide or hair of him."

Strang got up and paced up and down in exasperation. He was getting nowhere very fast; same as with the other cases. He whirled suddenly on the old woman.

"You sure there wasn't a sign of him around?"

"Well," she admitted reluctantly.

"Now that you mention it, I *did* find his wallet on the floor, and some loose change; like as if they had dropped from his pocket and scattered all over."

The detective snorted. Now maybe he was getting somewhere.

"Why didn't you tell me that before?"

"I didn't think it was important," she mumbled.

She thought she'd get away with the dough, thought Strang. Aloud he insisted.

"Anything else? Think hard!"

The woman looked suddenly uneasy. Her defiant, self-righteous look fell. She twisted her gnarled hands. Aha! thought Strang. She done him in herself. She's breaking; she'll confess!

"Come on, spill it!" he snarled. "I ain't got all day."

Mrs. Jenkins' glance was piteous.

"I swear I didn't touch a drop, even though my stomach was all misery. But I sneezed!"

Strang stared.

"Sneezed!" he repeated in bewilderment. "What the hell!"

"I'm this here now allergic," she explained. "Get a dog within a block o' me and I sneeze something terrible. There had been a *dog* in that there room not many minutes afore." She seemed to shrink into herself. "An'—an'—Mr. Keil ain't kept a dog for ten years. He knowed I couldn't abide them."

"Well, I'll be damned!" ejaculated Detective Strang.

**B**UT Gordon Keil had not been drunk that night. At least not on mundane liquors compounded of alcohol and other earthy ingredients. He was intoxicated — yes — but with a divine afflatus, with the ichor of the ancient gods.

He sailed by Mrs. Jenkins as he

would have ignored at that moment the ruling monarchs of earth. Walking swiftly on clouds as he did, how could he be expected to note the inconspicuous passage of ordinary mortals beneath? His own exaltation lifted him up the stairs, not his feet.

An aging man, was he? Rheumatic twinges, eh? Dyed hair and stomach that was full of holes, hey? Nonsense! He was youth personified, virile beyond all other men; a Hercules for strength and a Mercury for speed.

As he shut the door and paced up and down his room the events of the weekend whirled with a sort of divine dizziness in his brain. Dea Kirke had smiled on him; Dea Kirke had invited him to her palatial Westchester estate; Dea Kirke had *loved* him!

He savored each little link in the chain of circumstances with a greedy running of his tongue over quivering lips. It was Wednesday last that the incredible had happened. He had sat morosely at an inconspicuous table at the Club Tabarin, fingering the glass of warmed milk and nibbling with distaste the dry thin Melba toast that represented his diet. He was solitary, alone, fed up with life. Then Dea Kirke entered.

Her entrances were always dramatic. She came in like a goddess—a dark-haired, full-blown beauty that caught the breath of the beholder. It was impossible to judge her age; she might have been twenty or she might have been two thousand. Like Cleopatra, the serpent of old Nile, she was timeless in her surpassing loveliness.

The satin smoothness of her ripe olive skin showed no trace of the passage of years, her deep-pooled eyes could ship from limpid liquidity to the flashing coruscations of embered fires with lightning-like rapidity. Her raven tresses were gathered in a simple, Gre-

cian fillet at the nape of her neck, curiously old-fashioned, yet curiously effective. Her lips were ripely voluptuous and her bare arms firmly, yet softly molded.

For six months now Dea Kirke had been the sensation of New York. She had come like a visitation out of nowhere and took the town by storm. Mysteriously and fascinatingly foreign, her antecedents wholly unknown, she purchased out of seemingly inexhaustible funds a lovely estate near Armonk, in the Westchester hills. There she began to breed dogs.

But the word *dog* was too pale and innocuous a term for the magnificent animals that soon swarmed her kennels. Nothing like them had ever been seen before. They swept the Westchester Kennel Show clean of every prize. The judges raved. The other contestants likewise raved, though in different fashion. And every man within sight promptly fell in love with the compelling Dea Kirke.

NOW she came down the broad central aisle of the Club Tabarin, escorted by a strikingly unusual looking man. He was of medium height, barely as tall as the woman whose arm he held with such obviously passionate adoration. His powerful frame was faultlessly clad in black, silken-braided trousers and well-cut tails, but his face, framed in a broad, gray beard, was tanned and weatherworn with the passage of many suns and of many winters. A curious knowledge lurked in the fine-drawn corners of his eyes and his nose was squat like that of Socrates. A French ambassador, one might have decided offhand, or a Balkan diplomat. But no one was deciding anything about him just then. All eyes devoured the lady on his arm. The headwaiter literally bowed himself into a knot as

he greeted them; all conversation stopped at chattering tables. Men forgot the gilded partners they had brought with them; women bridled and suffered ineradicable pangs of envy. The dance floor shivered to a stop, and the orchestra seemed ludicrously frozen into an eternal soundless note. Admiration, desire, passion enveloped her as she moved in the wake of the flustered headwaiter to a table next that where Gordon Keil sat and sipped his arid drink.

If she were aware of the aura of desire with which the night club was suddenly impregnated, she showed no signs of it. She sank gracefully into the chair which the waiter solicitously pulled back for her; her companion dropped heavily into the other. They examined menus and ordered.

Gradually the stricken place stirred back into life. Men reluctantly averted their eyes to the accompaniment of low-pitched, but bitter complaints from their womenfolk. The orchestra resumed its ministrations, a sultry torch-singer came out into the spotlight and sang a sultrier song. The dancing couples took up their swinging and well-bred knives grated politely against food-filled dishes. Dea Kirke had made another of her inimitable entrances.

But Gordon Keil just sat and stared, the silly glass of milk forgotten in his hand. Her eyes lifted and met with his. A warm, frightening shock tingled down into his veins, brought back reckless youth and surging madness to the worn-out man. So that it did not even seem strange that she beckoned to him.

He rose spryly, almost ran to her table. Her depthless eyes were overpowering magnets, blessed pools in which to drown.

"Why, it is Gordon Keil," she said, and her voice held siren songs of melody. "I thought I recognized you, my

poor boy, sitting there so forlorn. You remember, we met at that stupid party of the Van Wycks a month ago?"

Keil did not remember. In fact, he did not know the Van Wycks. In fact, had he ever met the lovely Miss Kirke before, it would have left etched memories in his brain. Therefore he only stammered and look vacuous.

SHE dazzled him with a smile. Her ripe, molded lips opened and showed white, dazzling teeth; tiny, yet sharply pointed. "Of course, Gordon," she said dulcetly. "You were interested in Doberman-Pinschers."

He stammered again. His knowledge of dogs was confined to poodles and wire-haired terriers. He wasn't even quite sure just *what* a Doberman-Pinscher was. Mrs. Jenkins couldn't abide dogs; so he never bothered much with the so-called friend of man.

The dazzling smile became a sunburst; it bathed him in a glory that befuddled while it stirred his senses.

"I was just thinking of you, Gordon." She turned to her companion. "Wasn't I, Ulysses?"

The man's face was black with suppressed anger. Yet he said smoothly.

"I believe you made some mention of Mr. Keil."

"Oh, by the way," she smiled, seemingly not noticing her companion's sulkiness, "this is Ulysses."

"Ulysses S. Grant?" Keil giggled.

"No; just Ulysses. An old friend of mine."

"A *very* old friend," the bearded man added grimly, with a strange side look at Dea Kirke.

"Don't mind him," said the girl calmly. "He's merely devoured with jealousy every time I talk to a personable man."

Keil bridled and straightened his tie. The last added bits of his brain scram-

bled into mush. He no longer even wondered how the magnificent Miss Kirke had come to know his name. Ulysses glowered and shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"I was saying," she went on, "that I have just obtained some perfectly exquisite Doberman-Pinschers. Knowing your interest in this particular breed, I wondered if you would be willing to spend the weekend at my estate—my kennels are on the grounds, you know—and let me have the benefit of your expert advice."

Her eyes seemed to enlarge, to swallow him whole in their seductive depths. In a daze he heard his voice replying thickly:

"I'd be delighted, Dea."

There! He had daringly called her by her first name. But she did not take it amiss. Rather, she positively beamed on him.

"Good!" she applauded. "Ulysses will call for you at seven sharp on Friday evening."

The bearded man growled; then looked alarmed.

"Fine," he corrected. "Not before."

Dea's full-throated chuckle was a rippling melody.

"But of course, my friend. I forgot for the moment." A long look passed between the pair; a look that Keil was to remember when it was too late.

**P**ACING up and down his room now he tried to recapture that eventful weekend. It seemed almost frightening. The lovely lady, the glamorous Dea Kirke, had been strangely complacent. She had murmured passionate words of love to him during the sun-dappled days, but with shades drawn and doors securely locked, while outside a furious pack of baying dogs patrolled the spacious lawns and split the air with their clamor.

Sometimes he emerged from his swooning delight to listen with a curious unease. They sounded as if they wanted nothing so much as to tear him to pieces. In particular, one huge brute of a mastiff. There was also a curious giant of a man . . .

But her soft, clinging arms pulled him back, and all else was forgotten.

As night fell, however, the clamor ceased. Sinister quiet enfolded the place. Ulysses, absent all day, appeared as if by magic, his age-old eyes smoldering with strange fires. Abruptly Dea left Keil, doors and windows unlocked to the fragrant night, and vague alarms coursed through the lover she had left to his own devices.

The recollections brought the weary blood pumping once more through his veins. This evening, before a sullen and silent Ulysses drove him back to town, he had sworn eternal devotion to Dea. She listened to him with a faint smile.

"I'll remember that," she promised.

"But when will I see you again, darling?" he demanded passionately.

"Sooner than you think," she told him cryptically.

I can't live now without her, he thought to himself. Back and forth, around and around, he padded, a strange restlessness spurring him on. Padded! Why had that word sprung abruptly into his mind? He tried to stop himself. He couldn't.

Around and around the room he went, long-striding, almost at a lope. He blinked his eyes. By Heavens! he hadn't turned on the light! The room was in pitch darkness, yet he hadn't noticed. He, who always managed to bump clumsily into furniture even in full daylight, was now avoiding with instinctive ease unseen corners and sharp angles of cluttered bed, dressers, lounge and chairs. His eyes were wide

and piercing; the darkness held no secrets from them.

Curious too, how he had suddenly become aware of certain subtle odors. His nose twitched and snuffed greedily. Each item in the room exuded a distinctive effluvia that he at once, without knowing exactly how, tabulated and catalogued.

A long, drifting smell lay across the room like a pall. That, he knew, and wondered how he knew, was Mrs. Jenkins, who cleaned his quarters every morning at nine. He could even tell what objects she had picked up or brushed against in the course of her ministering peregrinations.

THEN he heard sharp sounds—the spatter of coins and metal keys upon the floor. Instinctively his hand fumbled for his pocket. They must have fallen out. But his hand was curiously clumsy. His fingers seemed stuck together; they could not enter the narrow folds. Then, even as he fumbled, the fold disappeared, melted away into a uniform rough fuzz.

Little alarm bells jangled in his brain. Again he tried to stop himself, to bring his padding lope to a halt. But he couldn't. His body drove forward, restlessly, bending over and over as if under an unbearable weight. His hind legs were becoming more and more unsteady. Hind legs! Why had he thought of that? And his ears! They were pricking up, twitching, sensitive to every vagrant wisp of air.

Suddenly he fell forward. His arms dropped to the floor with a sense of utter relief. He bounded ahead, swishing his tail. It was this last appalling fact that brought home the truth to him. His human brain froze with terror; then submerged under a welter of primeval instincts.

He was a *dog*! Lithe, long, blackly

muscular, with sensitive snout and alert ears—a Doberman-Pinscher!

The dog ran snuffing around the room. A long, drifting smell called to him. It quivered in his nostrils; it beckoned with maddening desire. It led through the door, down the stairs, along the night-silent streets, over country roads to a certain magnificent kennel in the Armonk hills. His lean litheness wriggled with an ecstasy to be off, to follow that superb scent.

The door was ajar. In his earlier shape, without knowing why he did it, the man Gordon Keil had twisted the knob and resumed his half-pad, half-pacings.

The Doberman-Pinscher clawed open the wood with its paw. Down the stairs it bounded; a silent, bullet-like shape. Crouched low, a flitting shadow, it eased through the outer door, fortunately open because Mrs. Jenkins couldn't abide the heat. He saw her, rocking and fanning herself in her room; she did not see the low-slung, noiseless animal.

Out on the hard pavement the dog leaped northward with a whine of anticipatory delight, following that delectable scent all the way to its lair.

THE Garden was packed to capacity. Home of fights and hockey games, of basketball and exhibitions, it now housed the premier blue-ribbon event in all dogdom. Nothing could be more doggy than the Universal Kennels show; nothing more aristocratic or exclusive. Every breeder, every exhibitor in the world pointed their best animals for the great event. A prize winner passed by the vigilant eyes of the judges had to be a world-beater, and its proud owner walked haughtily and superciliously among common mortals for years to come.

The huge arena was alive with color

and movement. Tanbark covered the exhibition rings and the runways so that delicate pads might find the going soft and comfortable. Assorted aristocrats of dogdom, brushed and curried and sleeked to within an inch of their lives, sat each on his separate dais, awaiting the fateful approach of the judges. Huge mastiffs, bored English bulls, slim, fleet borzois, long-haired spaniels, impudent terriers, snarling chows and friendly airedales—grouped by classes and age.

The place was a weird conglomeration of yips and bayings and shrill barking. Alternately proud and worried owners moved hastily among their pets, soothing the excitable, stirring up the phlegmatic, giving a last surreptitious primp to stray hairs and ruffled ears.

Chet Bailey patted a huge, tawny mastiff on the head.

"Buck up, old boy," he reproved him affectionately. "I know it's hard luck for you to run smack into that Ulysses brute in your first competition, but I'm rooting for you."

The great dog looked up into the gray eyes of his master as though he understood and whined. There was a certain similarity between master and dog, though the mastiff was built on gargantuan lines and his owner was lean and lithe like a fleet greyhound. But both had magnificent, rippling muscles that played under corded skin, and both had fighting faces, grim and stubborn with the determination never to acknowledge defeat.

Jessica Ware rested her gloved hand lightly on the dog's muzzle and evoked a low, deep growl of pleasure.

"Aren't you giving up too easily, Chet?" she demanded. "Every breeder who's seen this big, lovable old plug-ugly of yours thinks he's a champion."

The young man's gray eyes smiled

at her, but there was no mirth in them.

"Sure he is; but Miss Kirke's Ulysses is in a class by himself. He's walked away with every show he's entered. Look at him over there."

There was no question but that the mastiff called Ulysses dominated the show. He was a magnificent beast—huge, calm, wise with a wisdom beyond that of the mere mortals who gaped and pointed and examined his fettles, his slim, steel-sprung haunches, his broad, mighty chest, the firm, smooth forepaws.

The girl stared at him with troubled eyes. The dog stared back calmly. Its eyes seemed to probe her, to weigh the human before him.

Jessica turned away with a little shiver.

"I got a strange feeling just then," she told Chet. "As though he were a bit contemptuous of us all. As though he considered us—humans and dogs alike—beneath him."

Chet forced a grin.

"Any dog breeder would agree with him. He'd tell you that a thoroughbred is the one perfect thing in this transitory, incomplete world." He stroked his own dog's head again. "Poor Warrior; I'm afraid you're going to be licked."

THIS time Warrior disregarded his master's hand. His great head swung in the direction of his rival. His powerful legs crouched under him as if for a spring, the short, wiry hairs became wire-bristles all over his body, and his red-flecked eyes retreated deep into their muscle folds. A deep growl, fierce with hate, rumbled in his chest; his fangs retracted in a long snarl.

"Hold him!" the girl cried suddenly. "He's all set to jump."

Chet's whipcord hand shifted to a firm grip on the collar.

"So he is," he said, surprised. "Down, Warrior! You'll get nowhere starting a fight. Take it easy, old boy."

The huge dog whimpered, but obeyed. Yet the hair continued to bristle and his wrinkled muzzle to quiver.

"He's never done that before," frowned Chet. "Usually he regards other dogs with a superb indifference." He bent down and snapped a chain from its rooted peg to the collar. "Safety insurance," he explained.

Jessica shuddered.

"He had the same feeling about that other dog that I had. Something sinister almost."

"Don't let your imagination run away with you," Chet advised. "He's uncannily perfect; but he's still a dog. Come on, darling. Let's take a last look at Pinafore before the judges start. Thank heavens Miss Kirke hasn't entered a Doberman-Pinscher. That means I have a good chance." He looked long at the girl. "If Pinafore wins, we get married tomorrow."

Jessica flushed. She was enough to stir any man's pulse even in repose; but when soft, pink color flooded her cheeks, the blood made a millrace in Chet's veins. Her body was slim, compact and vibrant with life. Her pivotantly tilted nose contrasted charmingly with the serious intelligence that informed her wide gray eyes. Her short, golden-tinted locks always gave the impression of ruffling, sportive winds. Her chin was femininely rounded, yet strong and decisive nonetheless.

"I don't know why our happiness must wait upon a blue ribbon in a dog show," she said at length. "Even if Warrior or Pinafore *doesn't* win—"

"Please don't let's go over that again, darling," Chet retorted wearily. "I may be a failure, a has-been; but I'll

never marry you to live on your money." His jaw went grim. "I've staked everything on this last chance. I know dogs pretty well; I've loved them all my life. Let me get a blue ribbon in this show, and dog fanciers all over the world will swamp me with orders. But if I don't—" He shrugged, and the lift of his shoulders was more eloquent than words.

Jessica shook his arm in exasperation.

"*You* a failure!" she cried. "Who saved the South Pole Expedition from disaster? Who threw a bridge across the San Pedro Canyon when every other engineer declared it was impossible? Who—?"

Chet stopped her with a wry grimace.

"All past history, my love. Pre-depression, so to speak. The world is not interested in what you once did. It's what you're doing now that counts. And I'm raising dogs."

"For that awful Miss Kirke to beat," she stormed. "I hate her."

"That's not sportsmanlike," he reproved. "She has a knack—an uncanny knack. And—she's beautiful," he finished with a grin. "But come on; let's put the bankroll on Pinafore. At least *he* has a chance."

THE Doberman-Pinscher was beautiful. Black as midnight, long as an arrow, clean and sound in every limb. He wriggled joyously at the sight of them.

Chet took a deep breath.

"Thank heavens the ubiquitous Miss Kirke has no Pinscher—" he repeated.

Jessica's manicured nails dug suddenly into his arm.

"Hasn't she?" she wailed. "Look, Chet, look!"

The young man whirled; a sinking sensation at the pit of his stomach.



Already that breathless murmur, that swaying sound as of trees in a wind, warned him what to expect.

Dea Kirke was making another of her splendidly timed, spectacular entrances.

But Chet had no eyes for the siren face of the woman. He stared aghast at the dog who trotted submissively at her side, held in place by a slender leash. It was a Doberman-Pinscher, but such a specimen of the breed as he had never seen before.

Its coat was a burnished flame; its ears were sharply pointed and quivering with life. Its jowls, its deep chest and slender throat, the proud lift of its delicately poised legs, convinced him at once. Poor Pinafore, greatly bred as he was, didn't hold a candle to this phenomenal animal.

In a daze he heard Jessica's anguished cry:

"Oh, Chet; is that dog entered?"

"I don't know," he countered grimly. "He's not on the printed list. But I'm going to find out."

He went swiftly over to the group that had gathered as if by magic around the woman and the dog. The chief judge was among them.

"It's a bit irregular, Miss Kirke," he heard Kurt Halliday say doubtfully. "But if there is no objection—"

"I'm sure there won't be any," Dea murmured, giving the white-headed old judge the full benefit of her smile. "Ah, here comes Mister Bailey. Ask him."

Chet disregarded the subtle intonation in her voice, pushed his way through the throng.

"What is the meaning of this, Mr. Halliday?" he demanded.

The judge stroked his thin white hair with distracted fingers.

"Why—uh—Miss Kirke wishes to enter her dog, this—uh—Doberman-Pinscher, in Class A competition, Divi-

sion 3." He seemed flustered. "I know—uh—it's against the rules, but Miss Kirke has explained. The dog was shipped from the Island of Melos, and she didn't think it would reach here in time. That was why it wasn't entered. But as long as it came—" He made weak, washing movements with his hands.

"The rules are definite, Mr. Halliday," Chet said coldly. "All entries must be registered at least two weeks before the show, and the entry fee paid."

"You needn't worry about the fee, Mr. Bailey," retorted Miss Kirke. "As for that silly rule about entries, surely you wouldn't take advantage of a technicality like that. All the other contestants have agreed to waive the rule. Haven't you, gentlemen?"

HER beauty turned on dazzling full, like a million-candle-power searchlight. The men blinked in adoration. Freddie Gross, owner of Laddie II, said vacuously,

"None at all, Miss Kirke. It's a pleasure to waive every rule in the place for such a lovely woman as you."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Gross," she beamed.

"And that goes for me, too," George Lesser, owner of Jerry III, chimed in eagerly.

"And for me—and me—and me—" chorused the other contestants.

The judge lifted his arms.

"There you are, Mr. Bailey," he stammered. "Of course, you still have the right—"

Jessica thrust her way through to Chet.

"Don't do it," she whispered fiercely. "You know it isn't fair. Those men wouldn't do it for you, or for anyone else in the world but that—that woman."

Chet felt suddenly icy calm. He saw how it was. He knew what the papers would headline tomorrow. He knew that he'd be accused of bad sportsmanship, of taking advantage of a technicality. The victory would be ashes in his mouth. In a steady voice he said:

"All right, I'll waive the rule, if the others do."

Halliday heaved an audible sigh of relief.

"Good, then that's settled. Come along, Miss Kirke; I'll place your dog. By the way, what's his name?"

Dea hesitated. An enigmatic smile flitted over her lovely countenance.

"Call him 'Chinese Gordon'," she said at last. Then to Chet: "Thank you! You are a gentleman—and a *very* personable young man."

But Chet had already turned on his heel; was stalking away, with Jessica holding bitterly to his arm.

"You let that—that hussy blind you with her charms; the same as she has done with everyone else. Oh, Chet!" she wailed. "You refuse to marry me until you have made money of your own; and now you've thrown away your last chance. You don't love me; you—"

She stumbled as they went up the narrow corridor to the boxes. He caught her fiercely, almost shook her.

"You don't understand, Jessica. Every breeder, every dog fancier, would have me labeled as a bum sport. I'd be ostracized. The blue ribbon that Pinafore might have won wouldn't have meant a thing." His brows knit. "That story about the dog being en route from Greece doesn't go down with me. She could have entered him just the same, and withdrawn the name if he didn't arrive in time." He was speaking now to himself more than to Jessica. "I wonder where she really picked up such a worldbeater at the last moment. I *thought I knew every pedigreed Dober-*

*man-Pinscher in America.*"

MATTERS went just about as Chet had expected. Dea Kirke's entries in all classes took the honors. There was not even the semblance of any competition. The judges lingered long and lovingly over her dogs, gave hasty, cursory examinations to the others, and announced the results. It was true that they lingered a moment over the mastiff, Warrior; but Ulysses won by a comfortable lead. As for poor Pinafore, he was literally swamped by the newcomer, Chinese Gordon.

Chet expected it, but he couldn't help the sensation of sickness that overwhelmed him at the final results. He had banked so hard on this Show. Jessica, next to him, was clenching her hands. He wasn't quite sure, but she sounded as though she was saying most unladylike things under her breath.

Ulysses, the giant mastiff, was now being led out into the center of the arena. Dea Kirke, smiling that enigmatic, alluring smile of hers, had him on leash. Kurt Halliday raised his thin, veined hand for silence.

"The judges," he announced, "have unanimously decided to award the grand ribbon of honor for the best dog in all classes to the mastiff, Ulysses, owned by Miss Kirke. And may I add, that in all our years of breeding and judging, we have never had the privilege of examining such a perfect—superlatively perfect, I might say—specimen."

He turned to the girl, beaming.

"Miss Kirke, it gives me great pleasure—"

"The old fool!" Jessica flared with feminine illogic. "He's old enough to know better."

Chet tried to be fair.

"There is no question about it. Ulysses *is*—"

A deep-throated growl interrupted him. A huge, tawny shape shot like a bullet across the ring, straight for the calmly massive, unconcerned winner of the Grand Award.

"Warrior!" Chet shouted and left his seat like another bullet.

Instantly the great Garden was in an uproar. Shouts, screams, cries of alarm, a stampede by the timid and the frightened for the exits. A hundred dogs, infuriated by the clamor, lent their shrill voices to the din, strained at leashes to be in at the unexpected roughhouse that was impending.

Attendants came running across the tanbark, holding short, thick clubs in their hands. Dea Kirke turned, her eyes wide with a curious gleam. She did not seem in the slightest frightened at the apparition of hurtling death. Ulysses, the mastiff, swiveled on his haunches, bared his fangs with a snarl of defiance. There was an almost human quality to the sound. Kurt Halliday took one look at the oncoming dog and fled, his pipe-stem legs wobbling ludicrously as he ran.

**W**ARRIOR meant business. Head low, powerful jaws agape, he bounded forward. Chet raced across the churning ring from the opposite direction. Once those two giant dogs locked in conflict . . .

"Down, Warrior!" he yelled. "Down, I say."

He might as well have saved his breath. The infuriated mastiff, ordinarily gentle and obedient, paid no attention to his master's commands. His deepset eyes were fixed in furious hate on the enemy.

Just as he sprang, Ulysses jerked loose from his leash, hurled forward to meet him. Dea Kirke, cheeks flushed, eyes glowing, clapped her hands.

"Why, its like old times," she cried.

Excited laughter was in her voice. "Go it, Ulysses, go for the Trojan Warrior."

Warrior lunged, his great jaws snapping. But they snapped on impalpable air. The mastiff, Ulysses, just at the moment of impact, had sidestepped nimbly, pivoting on stiff, straight legs. As the bewildered Warrior slid past him, he whirled, raked long teeth across sliding haunches and flashed back.

The outraged Warrior growled terrifyingly, clawed around to meet this strange, lightning-like attack. He charged again. Once more Ulysses leaped to one side. This time, however, he was not quite fast enough. A fang ripped across his jowl, leaving a long, red trail from mouth to ear.

A great roar burst from the injured dog. He leaped after the still-sprawling foe, all tactics forgotten. His teeth sank deep into Warrior's haunch. The great mastiff swung around, howling, seeking a hold with snapping jaws.

Then human beings were upon them both. Chet grabbed Warrior's collar, yanked with steel-strong muscles. The attendants laid heavy clubs methodically upon both animals, rapping smartly upon tender snouts. Ulysses broke away at once, whirled out of range. Warrior, doglike, struggled furiously to get once more at his enemy. His left hind leg was badly mangled. But Chet held him in a tight, firm grip.

"Down, Warrior!" he said sharply. "What's gotten into you?"

"It was your dog's fault, Mr. Bailey," panted one of the men. "We saw it all. He broke his chain and came out like a bat out of hell."

"I know," Chet acknowledged. "I'm taking all the blame. If there was any damage to Miss Kirke's dog, I'll make good."

To himself he was wondering how he could possibly pay. The dog, Ulysses, was worth a fabulous price. Any dis-

figuring scar would throw him out of future competitions. And he didn't have a cent. His last few dollars had gone into paying the entry fees. As for poor Warrior, he could never be exhibited again.

Dea Kirke's cheeks were flushed. Her dark eyes sparkled with strange, shifting lights. If Ulysses were superlative among dogs, her beauty outshone that of all womankind. She laughed suddenly.

Chet whirled in surprise. Across the arena he heard the anxious call of Jessica, hurrying to the center of disturbance; but all his nerves were suddenly tingling to the electrifying ardors in Dea's eyes.

"You needn't worry about Ulysses, Mr. Bailey," she said softly. "I wouldn't have missed that splendid charge of your Warrior for anything. You know—I like him—and *you!*"

HER glance was suddenly demure. Her long lashes lowered to veil the sparkle in her eyes.

Chet's heart began to turn flipflops. Jessica seemed queerly faroff.

"Why—why, thanks a lot," he stammered. "You're taking it in a very sporting fashion."

She made a little gesture. Her lips quirked maddeningly.

"There are other dogs. To tell you the truth, I was beginning to weary of old Ulysses. He's been rather a bore for some time. Look!" she added as if on the impulse of the moment. "He's ruined your dog, Warrior. I'd be glad to show you just how I breed such marvelous animals. Would you care to be my guest for a week? We could put you up tonight. At the end of that time you'd know the technique *perfectly.*"

Chet was astounded. Other breeders had clamored for a chance to see Dea

Kirke's kennels, and had been turned down flat. True, she had entertained weekend male guests before; but none of them had been dog-fanciers. There had been Sam Wahl, for instance. Chet knew him slightly. Poor Sam had disappeared when he came back to New York. The papers mentioned something about the possibility of a defalcation in his books at the bank, but the police hadn't uncovered it as yet.

"Why—certainly—I'd be glad—" he heard himself saying.

Then Jessica burst in upon them. Her warm brown hair was tousled and her lovely face was compact in a tight, hard knot. Warrior tugged at Chet's restraining hand and growled furiously. Strangely, his eyes were fixed no longer on the Watchful Ulysses, but on Dea Kirke herself. His short hairs bristled, the muscles crawled and bunched under his bloody pelt, and there was hate and fear equally mingled in his gaze.

"I don't think, Chet," Jessica fought to hold her voice steady, "that you ought to accept Miss Kirke's invitation. She's done enough damage to you already."

Chet stared.

"Why, how can you say that!" he gasped. "If anything, *I'm* the one to blame. Warrior—"

"Warrior knew what he was about," the girl blazed. "You can trust his instinct. Look at him now. He senses that there's something wrong about that—that woman and her precious Ulysses." Her tone grew imploringly. "Please, Chet, don't go. I—I'm afraid."

"I think your friend is a trifle overwrought, Mr. Bailey," Dea said with a sympathetic air. "Of course, if you don't wish to come—"

Chet pivoted angrily on Jessica.

"You're most unfair. I'm surprised at the way you're acting. Here Miss Kirke is acting like a sportswoman, and

you choose this time to defame her." He swung back to Dea. "I shall be very pleased to accept your kind invitation," he said warmly. "I'll meet you after the Show."

"Chet, darling!" But he did not stop to listen to Jessica's anguished cry; he stalked stiff-leggedly away, holding the huge, unwilling mastiff firmly by the collar.

THE sun was beginning to gild the long, wavering line of the Palisades as the sleek limousine purred over the hilly stretches of the Old Country Road.

Dea Kirke seemed curiously uneasy as she glanced with calculating eye at the faint streamers of twilight. In the front seat, next to the chauffeur, Ulysses whined anxiously. To Chet, along with other strange incidents of this queer trip, it seemed that the whine held a peculiarly human note of urgency.

The woman leaned forward toward the open glass slide between front and rear compartments.

"You'd better hurry, Phemus," she said. "It's getting late."

The chauffeur twisted in his seat.

"I'm doing seventy now, Miss Kirke. But don't worry. We'll get back before the dark comes fully."

Chet noted that he pronounced her name as though it had two syllables—Kirk-ee. That struck him as strange; but certainly not as strange as the appearance of the chauffeur himself.

Phemus was huge—a veritable giant. His massive head grazed the roof of the unusually high-ceiled car. He must, thought Chet, be at least seven feet in height, and built proportionately. His eyes were frighteningly round as a saucer and baleful in their unwinking glare. Chet wondered how he had even managed to get a driver's license; wondered in fact if he had any license at all. But he seemed skilful enough at the wheel.

Chet was beginning to feel a trifle uneasy himself, in spite of the subtle, tingling warmth that pervaded him at this close proximity to the voluptuous woman at his side.

The car picked up speed. It was doing eighty now over the deserted road, swaying smoothly from side to side. He felt the woman flung against him, and her flesh was infinitely soft and all-pervading. In the delicious sensation he forgot to ask why, if they were in such a hurry, they had chosen this longer, lonely route rather than the straight, well-traveled Bronx River Parkway.

Armonk nestles in the fold of a hill. They swung off on a winding, dirt road that had the appearance of being but seldom used. The speed of the car became more urgent, the hurrying tension within more evident. The dog, Ulysses, no longer whined. He seemed to be moaning. In the gathering dimness Chet suddenly blinked. The great mastiff head was blurring on the seat in front—or was it some queer trick of the fading light?

Dea said encouragingly.

"We're almost there, Ulysses."

The dog whined in answer. It sounded as though a human being were having difficulty over the word:

"Hurry!"

The dirt road came to a dead end. A high stone wall, surmounted by barbed wire, stretched to invisibility through the tangled woods on either side. An arched portal, barred by a massive grilled gate, was directly in front. As the car hurtled forward without slackening its speed, Chet tensed his muscles for a crash. Was the chauffeur Phemus, mad?

BUT the gate swung open as they roared down upon it, and they went through in a spatter of gravel. A man

stood at the gate, watching. Chet's nerves were jumpy. Again his eyes must be playing tricks on him. For the guardian of the gate towered in the gloom up and up and up. All that he could see in the half-light were a pair of giant legs—calves like the columns that upheld the great temple of Karnak; thighs that disappeared into the darkling sky.

It must have been his nerves, of course—or the light. For even as the car ripped through, the truncated mass shrank suddenly and formed a shriveled old man, bald as an egg and clad in a flowing black robe spangled with silver stars and crescent moons.

The limousine skidded with a squeal of brakes. The front, right door flung violently open while the car was still in motion and the dog, by now a blurry mass, bounded out and melted into the close-pressing trees. Even as it did, darkness came with a rush. The last sunset glow in the west faded and the stars pricked out.

The little old man came forward.

"You shaved it pretty close that time, Dea Kirke," he reproved. "The next time you will come too late, and then Ulysses—"

His voice was rusty and creaking like the hinges of an unoiled gate. His sharp-pointed face was hollowed with the ravages of innumerable years. He too pronounced the woman's name as though it were di-syllabic.

"It wouldn't matter much," she responded indifferently. "I am getting rather bored with him, Atlas. Besides—"

The old man peered inside. His sunken eyes glowed in the darkness.

"Hello!" he said. "You've brought another visitor with you. Aren't you ever gluttoned?"

Her laugh was like the tinkling of ice in a glass.

"Never, Atlas. This is Mr. Chet-

worth Bailey, a breeder of dogs and a famous adventurer to boot. I intend to call him Chet."

Chet murmured some deprecating words. He was a bit dazed, and alarmed. It was bad when one's eyes began to play disconcerting tricks. First it had been the dog, Ulysses; then it was this little, weazened chap called Atlas. He'd have to go to an oculist when he got back to town. Perhaps he needed glasses!

Curious, too, the names of these people; these retainers and dogs with whom Dea surrounded herself. Greek—out of the old mythologies. The dog, Ulysses. The chauffeur, Phemus. Obviously a shortening of Polyphemus. Atlas. He grinned to himself. No connection there. Atlas had been a fabled giant who upheld the world on his brawny shoulders; and this—

He stopped right there, remembering that strange vision of columnar legs whose body was above the clouds. But that was nonsense, of course. Dea was a Greek by origin; she had acknowledged as much in connection with the Doberman-Pinscher, *Chinese Gordon*. And her marvelously classic beauty bore it out. Naturally she would cling by preference to the ancient Greek names.

THERE were no lights on the grounds. Only the dim stars showed the path on which they walked. They were alone—he and the woman. Phemus had driven away, and Atlas was gone. So was the mastiff, Ulysses. Deep silence enveloped them. A heady aroma breathed in his nostrils. With an effort he drew a trifle away from Dea.

"Where are your kennels?" he asked inanely.

"I don't need any," she replied. "That's part of my system. The dogs roam loose over the estate."

"But, good God!" he gasped. "You

can't allow thoroughbreds to—"

The night seemed suddenly to close in on him. From all sides, as if by magic, they appeared. They rimmed them in a compact circle. Their tongues lolled redly in the starshine, their eyes gleamed like burning torches. From the smallest to the largest they moved stealthily forward, haunches close to the ground, ears pricked up, slowly but relentlessly narrowing the gap.

Tiny, vicious Pekes next to monstrous Irish wolfhounds, hairless Mexicans beneath the huge paws of Newfoundlanders; chows, terriers, flopped bloodhounds, bassets, skyes, pointers, Dalmatians, English bulls, shepherds—all the dogs that breeders had ever managed to rear and some that Chet had never seen before. Magnificent animals—every one of them—yet terrifying now in the way they stalked the humans who had ventured into their midst.

Hate and fear mingled strangely in their slow, bristling approach; overpowering lust to kill and rend alternating with a groveling dread—not of Chet, the man; but of Dea Kirke, the lovely woman!

Instinctively Chet sprang in front of Dea, trying to shield her. Instinctively his hand went to his pocket; came away empty. He had no gun with him.

"They're on the kill," he said low, but sharp. His eyes darted around for a path to safety. But the circle was close, impenetrable, and it was narrowing every moment of hesitation. There was a tree, however, close to where they had stopped. In another moment or so that too would be submerged under the approaching pack.

"Quick!" he whispered. "Get to the tree; but don't run. We'll have to climb it, or they'll tear us to pieces. Something's happened; I've never seen animals act like that before."

Her laugh rose startlingly on the night air, and the sound brought a terrifying response from the dogs. A chorus of sharp, explosive sounds, wholly unlike the barking of normal animals or the growl of stalking hunters. Rather it was the pentup fury of condemned men whose vocal cords had snapped under the commingled terror and helpless fury that held them in bondage.

"I do not run, or walk, from my dogs," she said calmly. Without haste her hand moved to her gown. It was a clinging, form-fitting—and form-revealing—dress of Nile green, yet Chet had not noticed the narrow, almost invisible pleat that ran from her hip down to the hem. She opened a tiny flap and pulled out a small, slender whip.

She cracked it sharply. It made a whistling, high-pitch sound that seemed to puncture Chet's eardrums.

"Down, you scum, you vermin of all times! Back, slaves, before I make you feel the bite of my lash! Away, before I sink you into the limbo of forgotten things! What, you seek to spring upon your mistress? Have you forgotten—?"

THE dogs slowed to a halt, stifflegged, bristling. Their jaws slavered with eagerness, yet a gathering dread glowed in their reddish eyes. She lifted the whip threateningly.

At the second sight of it they broke and fled. No sound issued from their throats, but terror winged their pads. As eerily as they had appeared, so now they vanished. Chet took a deep breath. It hurt his lungs. He had not realized that he had not breathed for long seconds, that every nerve and muscle had been tensed against the long, ripping springs he had expected.

"Whew-w!" He mopped his brow, wet with something that was not the dew of night. "I thought sure we were goners then." He whirled on Dea.

"For God's sake, what manner of dogs do you raise? They hate you worse than they hate death itself."

She favored him with a strange look.

"Now how did you happen to know that?" Then she smiled. "You're right. It's not death they fear, but rather this whip. They know exactly what it means when I use it." She thrust it deftly back into its sheath. "Some day they hope to catch me without it." Her smile held a new quality in it. "They've waited a very long time—most of them. But let's waste no more time on those brutes. We're almost at the house."

The night was warm, yet Chet shivered a bit as he went with her toward the turreted and battlemented castle that loomed before them in a parklike opening among the trees. It looked strangely incongruous in its Westchester setting—like a misplaced bit of medieval Europe. As indeed it was.

Chet remembered now. Some extravagant millionaire who, to please his romantic bride, had transported stone by stone, and lintel by lintel, a hand-hewn chieftain's hold from its Macedonian pinnacle to the peaceful hills of his Westchester estate. Hardly had it been laboriously reconstructed, however, when the young bride died; and the bereaved husband sickened at its sight had placed it on the market for sale. Dea Kirke had purchased it.

The great inner hall was truly baronial. Its arched stone vaulting sprang upward to the dimness of the roof, and innumerable recessed crypts melted into the shadows. No modern electric lights illuminated the interior; instead, huge torches of polished metal jutted from the buttresses and shot forth streamers of dazzling flame.

In the center of the floor's vastness a small table was laid with gleaming napery and sparkling glassware. Huge, faceted bowls groaned under heaped

fruits of exotic hue — pomegranates, wine-purple clusters of grapes, ripe, black olives, golden-skinned apples, figs with tender, bursting skins. A roasted boar elongated fiercely on a bronze platter with tiny yellow plums for eyes and tusks dripping a golden nectar. Haunches of venison, baby lambs spitted whole, plump partridges and other birds whose stripped identities Chet did not know, flanked the crisply browned boar. Wine of royal hue gleamed in tall goblets, and over all a peacock spread its magnificent, iridescent feathers, like a guardian spirit at the feast.

Two chairs were drawn up to all this splendor.

In one of these sat a man. His face was broad and squat, and a gray beard rimmed it in. Experience and the wisdom of much adventuring lurked in the tanned wrinkles that seamed his countenance and in the gray depths of his eyes. He rose impatiently at the sight of them.

"By Zeus!" he ejaculated, "I thought you'd never come."

DEA'S face was an inscrutable mask.

"The dogs thought to catch me unawares again," she said.

He moved toward her anxiously.

"You take too many chances, Dea. Some day they'll be successful; and then—"

She flung herself into one of the chairs.

"They weary me! I think I'll get rid of them all; ship them into the oblivion that they dread. It would serve them right."

The man nodded.

"I've begged you to do that these many centuries. I wish—"

He stopped; indicated Chet, who stood speechless and wondering, with a jerk of his head.

"Let him have his wine," he said



bitterly, "and tumble him into bed. At least the nights are mine, according to our compact. Zeus knows I have endured much for their sake." His voice trembled with thick longing. "Come, oh Kirk-ee!"

He flung out his arms in a pathetic gesture, turning his face to the left as he did so. A jagged rip from mouth to ear, recently wounded, glowed redly across his cheek.

Chet jerked forward angrily. Bewilderment and growing unease gave way to irritation. His fists were tight balls of muscular distaste.

"Now look here," he exploded. "I don't know who you are, and I don't give a damn! But I am no child to be disposed of as summarily as you seem to think. Miss Dea invited me here, and by God—"

The woman's voice was lazy, unhurried; but it cut across their smoldering passions like a sword blade.

"Stop it, my Chet! Stop it, Ulysses, you fool! You have been given credit for greater wisdom than to pout like a half-grown boy. Remember that I am mistress; now as always."

"Ulysses!" echoed Chet, and anger fell suddenly from him. His hackles rose and his blood prickled. He stared at the long, red mark with quickening horror. "Ulysses!" he repeated.

"An old friend," purred Dea. "You're thinking of the mastiff, are you not, my Chet?"

He forced himself into sanity, though the palms of his hands were wet.

"I was," he acknowledged. "Of course—"

"Of course!" she laughed, and her laughter was the music of many bells. "A mere coincidence. The dog Ulysses ran to join his fellows."

"A mere coincidence," Chet repeated obediently. But the hackles of his skin would not down. That new-made wound

across the cheek—!

A shadow deepened the man's eyes. An age-old sorrow that swept through them and disappeared.

"Remember also our compact, Dea," he warned.

She rose with sinuous grace.

"I am weary of your reminders. Take care you do not overdo them. *This* night I yield to Chet Bailey."

HER smile enveloped the young man in folds of lapping languor. He forgot his fear; he forgot everything but the awareness of her beauty, her siren splendor. The memory of Jessica Ware receded into a faint, blurred wraith of far-off days.

"Sit with me, and partake of this simple repast, my Chet."

As one in a dream, suffocating with the throb of his veins, Chet sat down. The girl sat opposite, her eyes fixed on his, engulfing him in their liquid depths.

Ulysses trembled; anger flamed in his face. Then smoothly, as though a curtained drop had slid into position, it cleared. A crafty smile played over his lips, lurked in his much-enduring eyes.

"You are right—as usual, oh Kirk-ee," he said. "Permit me to drink the bond of fellowship with your latest guest."

There were three goblets of wine on the table. One held a golden-red liquor that flashed and coruscated in the flame of the torches. The second was a pale amber, beaded and winking at the rim. The third was a dark, rich purple, bloodied with the juice of sun-dappled grapes. He picked up the golden-red goblet, poured into a crystal glass.

He offered it with a courtly gesture to Chet.

"Here, my young friend; to your health and speedy metamorphosis." He stared at the glass. "How reminiscent is the color! I once saw an Irish setter

with just such a golden sheen. But *he* was not magnificent enough for our Kirk-ee's kennels." He thrust it into Chet's hand. "Drink!"

With a mighty wrench Chet broke loose from his thrall. His brain cleared. Warning signals jangled in his temples. He jerked the lifting glass away from his lips.

"What sort of balderdash is this?" he cried. "Do you think—?"

Dea came at him with the silent speed of a serpent. She plucked the glass from his rigid fingers, dashed its contents onto the stony floor. Anger made terrible lights in her eyes.

"Beware, Ulysses!" she said furiously. "You are trying my patience beyond all reckoning."

The man fell back.

"I did but the usual thing," he mumbled.

"Begone! I am deathly weary of you. I am tired of your ageless jealousies. Tomorrow *you* shall drink the golden wine."

For a long moment their eyes clashed with lightning fierceness. Chet jerked forward protectively. But Ulysses suddenly smiled, bowed, and walked with dignified strides out of the hall. He did not look backward.

The flaming wrath wiped clean from Dea's lovely countenance.

"Pay no attention to him," she advised softly. "He is jealous, that is all. He shall annoy us no further. That drink he proffered you is inferior stuff. Its color is lovely, but its taste is sour and slightly rancid. I use it only as a decorative affair."

She picked up the amber-colored goblet, poured into another glass.

"Drink this, my Chet. I can vouch for this Melian wine. It is made of straw-colored honey gathered by the bees of Hymettus and of ambrosia such as the ancient gods themselves took

greedily from the cupbearer, Hebe. It will fill your veins with intoxicating dreams beyond mere mortal delights."

HE knew that he should not drink it.

He knew that the whole setup was wrong; that this maddeningly beautiful woman and her pack of dogs had no right to be alive and breathing in the year 1941 A.D., in the United States of America. He knew now why the man, Ulysses, had that gash across his face. He knew—or rather, in the confused mists that dulled his ordinarily sharp and keen-edged perceptions—he knew that he ought to know.

Therefore he hesitated, fingering the seductive glass with its beaded amber liquid. She seemed to read his thoughts. She met his gaze with candid innocence. She poured another glassful from the same goblet while Chet watched suspiciously, seeking some trick of legerdemain.

She lifted it to her rosy lips, drank it down with a sigh of pleasure.

"Now do you see, my Chet?" she queried. "You need not fear."

It was true. There was nothing to fear. She had drunk the same liquor that she had proffered to him. He suddenly felt ashamed of himself. Ulysses, mad with jealousy, had tried to drug him with a dangerous drink. But Dea had saved him. Yet he had been suspicious. All these things could be explained — everything! Tomorrow, when he had rested and his mind was clear again, she would explain. Bah! Such things as had crept darkling into his brain would vanish with the risen sun. They would laugh and make merry over his eerie fantasies.

He lifted his glass, clinked it gallantly against her empty one, toasted:

"To a lovely woman; to the loveliest I know—except one!" Then he drained it down.

## THE RETURN OF CIRCE



The warm flush of the wine ran through Bailey's head; it drooped forward

The heady wine ran like liquid gold through his veins. It was marvelous stuff! Nectar and ambrosia indeed! Distillant of the gods!

Dea's face darkened at his toast; then broke into a faint smile.

"You refer, my gallant Chet, to the girl, Jessica Ware?"

"Yes."

"A *very* gallant lover," she said enigmatically. "Now let us eat."

They ate.

Her chair pushed close to his. Her hand touched his fingers casually as she carved the roast. Her thigh brushed against his body and made his heated blood to race. As she bent forward, her bosom betrayed its whiteness to his gaze.

The wine had been a potent drink; it flushed his cheeks and slurred his speech. It ran insidiously through the nooks and crannies of his being, and lifted with responding surge to the lady's overpowering charms. Her lips were temptingly curved; they parted with breathless invitation. He was slipping, falling into a chasm of beckoning delights. Her soft, warm arms moved toward him; her head bent slightly back and her eyes glowed. He swayed forward.

HE did not see the look of triumph that invaded her lovely eyes, the tiny, sharp teeth that hid behind her ripe, red lips. The image of Jessica receded wraithlike, despairing, thinning into misty smoke. Every fiber of his heated being yearned toward the delectable woman whose body slipped toward him with frankly open invitation; every guardian sense was clouded with wine and excitement. His hand went out fiercely, possessively . . . paused at the very moment of possession.

His blurred eyes went wide while

little warning signals jangled in his brain. Was he seeing things? Had the potent drink so befuddled his senses? Dea's face was changing!

Her slim, straight nose, classically beautiful, subtly broadened and flared at the nostrils even as he stared. Her creamy olive skin, smooth as old velvet, crinkled into folds and pockets and turned yellow as discolored parchment. Little black bristles began to sprout from her upper lip. The tiny white teeth grew long and yellow and curved out over a quickly pendulous lip. Her eyes, those pools of unfathomable jet, narrowed and retreated into layers of fattening flesh. Little dartles of red streaked them as they blinked upward at his startled face. Her body grew compact and barrel round; her outstretched arms shortened swiftly and the seeking fingers coalesced.

He shook his head sharply, trying to clear away the fumes that gave him this nightmare. But the vision refused to change; became momentarily more dreadfully distinct.

She peered up at him in surprise out of those little red eyes.

"Chet!" she said. "What is the matter? Why do you shrink suddenly from me? Am I not lovely and desirable beyond all other women? Am I not—?"

At least that was what she thought she was saying. But to Chet it began with a series of explosive grunts and ended in a shrill, quavering squeal. There was no doubt about it—Dea Kirke, the magnificent woman who had taken New York by storm, was turning into a pig!

She fell forward from her chair, her sharp-pointed fore-hooves making a clumsy clatter on the floor. Her curled little tail quivered. Her sow-belly dragged pendulous dugs. She lurched

toward him with a horrible travesty of sensuous longing.

Chet fell away from her in a revulsion of mingled fear and loathing. He was cold sober now. Good God! This lumbering sow, in whose piggish countenance he could still trace the fading remnants of a travestied Dea Kirke—he had almost taken her into his arms; had almost—

From outside he heard a man's sudden laughter. He whirled. Ulysses stood etched a moment in the oblong frame of the door, his broad, powerful frame glowing in the reflected flare of the torches, the night darkly sinister behind him.

"What does all this mean?" Chet cried out. "What hellish brew have you two concocted between yourselves? Let me out, I say."

Ulysses made no move. His voice was vibrant with scorn and self-contempt.

"Look at her! Look at the foul thing you thought to love—that I have loved her nigh three thousand years—because I cannot help it. She was bored with me, was she? She wished to install you in my stead, and cast me aside as she had cast every other mortal aside except me these many centuries? She knew me as a much-enduring man; but she forgot I am also a man of many wiles. I tricked her this time; I—"

FROM behind there came a great squeal; a furious, yet agonized snouting that trumpeted past Ulysses and hurled its mingled anger and anguish far into the night.

Hardly had it died before a new sound took its place. A sound as of monstrous feet thumping, shaking the earth with measured tread.

Fear sprang suddenly into Ulysses' eyes. The triumph was clean-washed

from his cynical, self-flagellating face, leaving it a sallow-gray.

"Now Pallas come to my aid!" he mouthed. "He comes—the Father—to wreak vengeance for what I have done!"

He turned and fled incontinently through the door, speeding like a startled hare along the battlemented wall until the trees swallowed him up.

The thumps became huger and more earth-shaking. Great oaks bent outward as though they were slight reeds pushed aside by a careless-walking lad. The solid ground flattened and heaved with thunderous groans. The squeals of the bellied sow became more urgent.

Chet rubbed his eyes. Out there, in the scudding moonlight, two legs stalked toward him. They were as much around as the monster sequoias he had seen in California. The great feet, shod in yard-long sandals, crushed the smaller trees like splintering matches in their wake. Up and up Chet's gaze traveled—up to mighty thighs and giant torso that lifted to the darkling clouds which swirled around the moon. He saw no more. The clouds hid the rest. He wished to see no more.

Chet Bailey had never been afraid in his life. Not when a lion sprang out at him unawares from a bush cluster in the African veldt; not when he lost his dogs and sled with food and tent equipment down a deep crevasse on a solitary mush across Antarctic wastes; not even when his plane dropped a wing as it roared over the sawtooth mountains of Alaska.

But now he was afraid. Afraid with a hammering terror that pounded his flesh into pulp.

He turned and almost collided with the yammering sow. He skated to one side, darted madly across the polished floor, straight for the steeply curving

stairs that went up into the reaches of the transplanted castle.

Below he heard voices. One was creaking, like the hinges of an unoiled gate, yet strangely gentle and soothing.

"There, there, daughter Kirk-ee, do not fear! Shortly you will return to your proper form. Though sometimes I wonder which it is—this, or that other. Your mother . . ."

The voice—it seemed to Chet like that of the little old man at the gate—paused and sighed.

"But never mind! How did this happen?"

The answer came in mingled grunts and squeals that gradually shaped into forming words and shifted into human tongue.

"It was Ulysses, father Atlas!" cried Dea Kirke. "He tricked me, even as he tricked me on the Isle of Aeaea. He added the drug to the drink, knowing exactly which I'd take. Father, rid me of him once and for all."

Chet's breathless speed took him out of earshot. He had to get away! What a fool he had been! Dea Kirke! Dea meant goddess! Kirke—di-syllabled—was the Greek pronunciation of Circe!

**A**N open chamber invited at the end of the hall. He flung himself inside, closed the door behind him, and hurled toward the slitted window. The outer stones were rough, he remembered. With gripping toes and fingers he should be able to clamber down and thread his way stealthily through the clustering wood toward the wall. Another climb and he would be out—out into the normal world of use and wont, solidly planted in 1941, anno Domini!

He leaned out over the deepset embrasure and fell back with a shudder.

The dogs sat outside in a tight, cir-

cumscribing ring. Back on their haunches, forelegs stiff, tongues lolling wickedly in the ragged moonlight, phosphorescent eyes glowing eagerly upward. A little growl of anticipation rippled around the beasts at the sight of him. They licked their chops.

There was no escape that way. Or any other! Suddenly calm, Chet surveyed the room. It was a bedchamber, magnificently furnished. A huge mediaeval bed with overarching silken canopy was soft and inviting with deep-tumbled featherbeds and gayly decorated cushions. Rosy little Cupids pursued amorous Psyches on the tapes-tried walls; and a wild boar bared its slaving tusks at bay before the lifted spear of a youthful Adonis.

But Chet could see no more. His eyelids weighted down. A drugged drowsiness fogged his senses. He tried to rouse himself. Fast-dimming consciousness warned him that it was dangerous to sleep. But his limbs sagged and his head drooped. He barely had strength enough to drag himself to the bed and fling himself into its cushioned comfort. Hardly had his limbs sunk nerveless before he was asleep.

His sleep was a long, shifting nightmare. All the creatures of unclean imagination paraded before him—chimæras, griffons, gorgons with snaky locks, blind worms that crushed worlds in their writhing folds, harpies that chewed with dripping jaws on human flesh, assorted fire-breathing dragons and wild-eyed sphinxes. They glowered at him and came on in serried rows, jaws champing in horrid anticipation.

He tried to escape them; but every way he turned they sprang into being in his path. Their fetid breaths were in his nostrils, their fangs gaped wide. A clear, despairing voice sheared through their close-knit ranks, calling

his name. A shudder rippled through them at the sound. They misted and disappeared as though the rising sun had pierced a fog.

The voice called him again. He knew the voice! With a glad cry he flung toward it.

"Jessica! Thank God you have come! Forgive me for—"

THE morning sun was dusting through the slitted embrasure as he leaped from the bed. There was the voice again of his dreams. Jessica's voice, bitter with that smoothly veiled contempt that only one lovely woman can bestow upon another, yet urgent with a fierce undercurrent of dread.

"I demand to see Mr. Bailey," she was saying. "We were to be married today. Don't hide him from me."

Dea Kirke's voice was equally smooth, yet cutting like a whiplash.

"It is a pity, my dear Miss Ware," she answered with irony, "that you have to search like this for the eager groom on your wedding morn. But I assure you Mr. Bailey is no longer here. Early this morning he remembered an appointment he had in town for noon. My chauffeur took him to the station."

"That's a lie!" Jessica cried. "It's just a week since he came up with you to this closely guarded estate of yours. No one has seen him since; he's vanished—just as half a dozen men have already vanished."

"By Atlas and Poseidon!" Dea's edged tones were like sharp little knives. "Do you realize what an accusation you are making? Those men to whom you doubtless refer all returned to their own homes. They were seen by their friends, their relations. If they chose to disappear afterward—"

"I know exactly what I'm accusing you of," retorted Jessica. "I'm accusing you—"

A masculine voice interposed hurriedly.

"Now, now, Miss Ware," soothed Detective Strang, "we mustn't say things we can't prove. I've checked those other cases with Miss Kirke, and everything was explained satisfactorily."

"To you, perhaps; but not to me. I *know* Chet. If I haven't heard from him, it's because—" Her voice choked off into sobs.

"Look, Miss Kirke!" Strang said with placating gesture. "Just to satisfy Miss Ware, would you mind if I searched your place a bit? Of course, I've got no search warrant, and you've got a right to refuse; but—"

Dea's laugh was merry and frank.

"Not at all, my dear Mr. Strang. My place is at your disposal. Go right ahead."

Chet was still drowsy and befuddled with his nightmares. The voices drifted up to him, making no sense at first. What did Jessica mean? A week since he had come here! What sort of nonsense was that? He had come only last night. And why did Dea deny his presence? Surely she knew he was up here. The window was open. In a second, if he wished, he could make his presence known to those below. In fact, that was what he was going to do!

"Jessica!" he shouted, and bounded toward the narrow casement. "This is a silly stunt! Why have you come—?"

But no voice issued from his throat. Instead, a dog barked furiously somewhere close by. He whirled. There had been no dog in the room with him. There still was none. Evidently the dream was thick upon him.

He shouted again. Again no words came forth, and that damned dog barked louder in his ears. He swung around, stiff-legged, glaring. If this was some sort of a jest—

His nose twitched suddenly, and his eyes raked down. He leaped high in the air, stunned, bristling; came down spraddling on four hairy, padded paws. Something swelled the corded muscles of his throat; issued in a fearful whine.

The realization froze him in his tracks, carved him into a marbled statue. He was a dog! A glossy-coated Irish setter, with reddish-golden mat, slim, long legs, long, sensitive muzzle and great, floppy ears.

**D**OWN below he heard human voices.

"There's one of your dogs howling, Miss Kirke. Wants to get out, I suppose."

"They always do," she agreed with easy calm. "Sometimes I shut one of them up in a room for training purposes."

For a moment that seemed eternity Chet was glued to the floor. His muscles were taut like drawn bowstrings. His breath came in snuffling little whines. His heart pounded madly within a shaggy breast. His ears perked up to cup the slightest whisper of sound. His brain seethed with stifling anticipations.

He was a dog—an Irish setter! Another in the string of magnificent animals with which Kirke—or Circe—had surrounded herself! The drugged drink which Ulysses had cannily switched on him had done this. For a week he had slept unknowing, while his human body shifted gradually to canine form. No wonder Dea was willing to let Jessica and Strang search for him. They'd never—

Like hell they wouldn't! With a grim bark he leaped forward, straight for the door. The long, lean setter took the stairs downward five at a time, a smoothly functioning, magnificent animal.

He whipped through the great entrance hall just as the outer portal opened and two women and a man entered. One was Dea Kirke—lovelier than ever. She was clad in a long, sleekly clinging morning gown of green silk, and her perfectly molded face was innocently smooth as that of a newborn child. Yet Chet saw, or thought he saw, the lurking semblance of that drop-bellied sow with broad, pink snout in her sinuous curves, in the droop of her ripe-red lips and curling lashes.

The man with them—Detective Strang—was rather stout for a detective; with grizzled hair and little eyes that peered everywhere at once. He held his black bowler embarrassedly in his twisting hands. There was an apologetic air about him at this unwarranted intrusion.

But Chet's eyes fastened hungrily on the other girl. Jessica's cheeks were pale with anxiety and fear. Her slim, taut body quivered as in a strong wind. Her gray eyes were hollow with nights of weeping.

"I want every cranny searched, Mr. Strang," she said huskily. "I'm sure he—he—"

"Of course," soothed the detective. "But I don't believe—" He broke off at the sight of the hurtling dog. Involuntarily his hand reached for his gun. "There's one of your dogs loose, Miss Kirke!" he said sharply. "Is—is he vicious?"

Chet slid to a halt before Jessica. His silken paw clawed at her dress. His large, liquid eyes tried desperately to speak to her. He forced speech from his unaccustomed throat.

"Jessica, darling, you were right! Your intuition was perfect. I am Chet, who loves you more than anything else in this world. Help me, darling! Make Strang understand. She is Circe, the enchantress. Her dogs are men,



changed by foul drink to what we all are. Help! Help!"

JESSICA reached down and patted his desperate head with gentle fingers.

"Why, he's not vicious!" she said. "He's a lovely setter; the most beautiful animal I've ever seen. Look at those great, speaking eyes. Listen to him bark and whine, as though he were trying to tell me something. There's something almost human about such a splendid animal as this."

Strang made a grimace.

"I don't care much for dogs. Not since one brute of a Chow took a hunk out of my leg when I put the cuffs on his master."

Dea smiled angelically on the detective.

"Perhaps," she murmured, "my pets would do the same for me if you—ah—tried to take me prisoner."

Chet redoubled his efforts. He wriggled his body; he whined frantically; he poked his muzzle into Jessica's hand. God! Couldn't she see? Couldn't she understand? Couldn't their mutual love break through the barriers and bring the imprint of understanding on her brain?

Alas! The barrier was insurmountable. He was a dog—nothing else to her. Her mind was clouded with anxiety, with eagerness to find her lover, unknowing that he was under her hand, desperate with effort to tell her who he was.

She patted him mechanically.

"He's taken a liking to me," she said. "But we'd better get on."

"Right," said Strang. "We haven't all day."

He moved quickly toward the walls, sniffed expertly around, shifted furniture, tapped every hollow-seeming spot, sought hidden traps.

"Nothing here," he said finally with a sigh. "We'll try upstairs now."

Dea watched him work with an enigmatic smile.

"My house is open," she invited. "You'll not find Mr. Bailey. Poor fellow! I'm really sorry for him."

Chet turned suddenly. A deep growl stirred in his throat. His hackles reared. Why hadn't he thought of that before? Here, before him, defenseless to his fangs, was the author of his transformation. If she were dead—

He sprang like a suddenly released spring. Straight for the throat of the lovely Dea Kirke. The growl became a roar. His lips retracted from snarling fangs. A red eagerness for that smooth white expanse, for the thin, blue vein that pulsed enticingly in a ravishing hollow . . .

Jessica screamed. Strang cursed and reached for his gun. But Dea only smiled. Her white hand did not seem to move, yet like a flash the slender whip lifted in her fingers.

"Back, slave!" she said. "Back or you writhe in eternal torture."

The whip whistled once. In mid-flight Chet felt an unbearable pain piercing his eardrums, his hate-filled eyelids. Molten fire ran like quicksilver through tortured veins. He fell to the ground, writhing, agonized.

She lifted it a second time.

"Begone!" she said. "That was but a fore-taste. This time there will be no surcease, no escaping."

Chet groveled weakly on the floor. The terrible fire that burned him was subsiding, but he knew without further telling that the second time that terrible whip would crack, he was doomed to all eternity. He knew now why the pack of hating dogs had vanished at the sight of it. He knew now why they were her slaves, wretched in their animal forms, yet unable to revolt.

Jessica cried:

"The poor thing! He was friendly and gentle with me. You are his mistress; yet—"

Strang held his gun watchfully.

"You'd better shoot him, Miss, and be done with it," he advised. "I've seen 'em like that before. He hates your guts; an' he'll get his opportunity some day when you ain't looking."

Dea smiled her ravishing smile.

"He's not broken in yet. But he will learn."

Chet darted to his feet and raced howling through the open door, out into the park-like grounds. Ungovernable terror sped his pistoning legs. Circe was right. Another session with that magic whip, and his spirit—that dauntless spirit which had carried Chet Bailey, the man, through every physical danger—would be broken forever.

AT the edge of the wood he met the giant, Phemus. The man whistled to him. He swerved fearfully. The man whistled again. It had a friendly sound. The great eyes, that had seemed so frightening that night he had driven them up, glittered with sympathy.

"Come here, old fellow," roared the giant. "You're the last one she's taken in, ain't you?"

Chet stopped, barked tentatively. He was hungry for human sympathy, for the sound of a human voice. It was true that Phemus was not exactly human. Those great saucer eyes of his, his shaggy locks and uncomplicated mind. Not very intelligent, perhaps; stupid enough, in all conscience; but good-natured.

Chet came closer. The giant bent down, and patted his head with a huge ham of a hand.

"Yes, sir," he roared. "You ain't the first, an' you won't be the last. She collects men, she does, that she-devil.

She's been a-doin' it fer Zeus knows how many centuries of time. She gets a kick out it. Useta make pigs out of um. But pigs ain't fashionable no more. Tried wolves fer a while. They wa'n't so satisfactory. Now it's dogs." He shook his massive head. "Zeus knows what she'll be tryin' next—monkeys, belike."

He slapped his great thighs and roared with laughter.

"That 'ud be funny all right. I seen them little shavers scampering around in Ethiop. They sure were cute."

Chet growled.

"Sure, I understand," boomed the giant, "Yu'd rather be a dog than them there other animals. Well, can't say's I blame yuh. It's a shame, though, old boy. Me—she took me frum my island where I was gettin' along swell with my sheep. Ulysses—he bashed out my brother's eye with a burning stick. Not that I hold it agin him," he added judicially. "Brother Poly liked the taste of men's flesh. I never could abide it. Course, I'm immortal, like Kirkee herself; otherwise, she'd a made a lapdog outa me."

His ham of a hand gentled the quivering dog.

"Some day she'll get her comeuppance. An' then you'll all be free; and me—I'll get me back to my Cyclop island." He sighed. "It ain't that this here America ain't a nice place to visit; but it's too big a place fer a home. I like an island—it's cozier."

The giant sighed again. His sigh was like the swish of a great windmill.

"I better get back tuh work. She'll be arter me ef'n I don't prune these trees." He pulled a tremendous pair of shears from his hip pocket and strode along the row of poplars, clipping great branches as he went.

Chet slid on all four paws into the sheltering woods. He wanted to think

this thing out. So near to Jessica, and yet so far. With her woman's intuition she knew that Dea Kirke had something to do with his vanishment; that her menage and dogs were not all that they seemed. But it had not been enough to recognize the man she loved within his furry shape. Even now she—and Strang with her—were searching the transplanted castle from cellar to turrets. They would find nothing; would go away baffled and discomfited.

Chet gritted his teeth, and a ferocious growl broke from him. Circe had won again; as she always had, as she always would throughout time.

HIS nostrils twitched. He lifted his muzzle and snuffed the air. His ears went up. His body tautened. The odor of strange animals was sharp on the breeze.

They filtered through the trees like shadowy wraiths—dozens of dogs—St. Bernards, whippets, fox terriers, beagles. They slunk low to the ground, twitching their tails, widening their nostrils to absorb his scent, stalking him as though he were a fox they had run to his lair.

Chet backed up warily, bristling. He bared his fangs. He vented a low growl as a warning. The dogs stopped short, sat on their haunches around him in a circle. Chet turned round and round. Were they but waiting the signal to spring and tear him to bits? He growled.

The St. Bernard got up, padded toward him. The others cocked their heads to one side—eyes alert, bright.

"So she got you too?" the St. Bernard nodded his big, wise head. "I hate to do this," he growled, "but misery loves company, they say. We're all in the same boat. Welcome!"

"Sure thing," went up a low chorus of yips. "We're all slaves of Circe. Welcome!"

Chet shook his head in bewilderment and barked back. He understood them easily—growls, barks, yelps.

"How long have you fellows been—uh—?"

He hesitated to say it, for fear of offense. The St. Bernard grinned.

"Dogs?" he completed. "It depends. Take myself. I'm Ennius, a centurion in Caesar's Second Legion. We were chasing pirates in the Aegean. My trireme hit a rock and sank with all on board. I managed to swim to shore. A beautiful woman took me to her palace. She fed me and made love to me." The great dog shook himself violently. "The next morning I was—this."

A Dalmatian barked.

"I was a Basque fisherman going to the Crusades. We captured the citadel at Acre. There was a lovely Saracen maiden—I spared her life. In return, she loved me—and made me—this."

A deep bass growl came from a Great Dane.

"I met the cursed enchantress in King Arthur's Court. She pretended to be a damsel in distress, and I, Sir Sagamore, went out with her on the quest. She exercised her charms, I yielded, and behold—"

The Doberman-Pinscher lifted his head defiantly.

"I'm not complaining," he said. "It was worth it. Two days with Dea Kirke such as I had, and she can keep me like this the rest of my life, for all I care."

Chet glared at him.

"You're the baby who's responsible for my being here. If you hadn't beaten Pinafore for the ribbon, I'd never have accepted her invitation." Then his muzzle opened in a doggy grin. "Sorry! It's not your fault, of course. I'm Chet Bailey. What's your name?"

"Gordon Keil."

"I remember now. Your name was in all the papers. Fifth man to vanish

mysteriously in as many weeks." He grimaced. "I suppose *I'm* making the headlines now."

"King Arthur knighted another knight, and forgot about me," grunted Sir Sagamore.

"Centurions were cheap to Caesar," rumbled the St. Bernard.

The Irish setter lifted its head angrily. His low bark was edged with contempt.

"You're all sorry for yourselves, aren't you? You've sat on your haunches for centuries and bemoaned your fate? You hate this Circe who's done this to you?"

A snarling wrath raced around the circle. Eyes gleamed in the shadows.

"Of course!"

All, that is, except the Doberman-Pinscher, who drooped his head.

"Then what have you done about it?" Chet demanded.

The St. Bernard shook his shaggy head.

"We've tried. We've tried to catch her offguard, to tear her to little bits. But the cursed witch has her whip handy all the time. It holds great magic."

CHET shivered. He remembered only too well the potency of that whip.

"I know," he acknowledged. "But you've gone about it the wrong way. You've acted just as the dogs, into whose shapes you have been cast, would act. You're men, human beings! Use your brains."

"How?" demanded Pedro, the Basque, with some show of reason.

"I don't know—yet," Chet admitted. "But there must be ways."

"Bah! I thought you knew." The Dalmatian moved away, disgusted.

Chet was stung to his mettle.

"The first thing to do," he retorted,

"is to get away from her. Escape."

"Yah!" sneered Sir Sagamore. "Suppose we do. Suppose even she doesn't find us. Then we remain dogs—in a world of dogcatchers."

Assent circled them at that.

"And besides," asserted Ennius, the centurion. "We forget Father Atlas."

Fear crept into their eyes at the mention of that name. Even Chet felt his paws grow weak. That little, baldish man in the spangled robe, who nevertheless could, when he willed, tower up into the clouds . . .

"We've got to chance it," Chet said with determination. "Once away from the power of her whip, we'll find a way." He tried to sound confident.

The St. Bernard regarded him for a while with wise old eyes. Then he said suddenly:

"Our new friend, the Irish setter, is right. And even if we lose—well, I, for one, am tired of being a dog. I'd rather hasten to that limbo with which she threatens us all the time. It can't be worse than this."

The Great Dane stepped forward, lifted his paw.

"Let it never be said that Sir Sagamore feared a quest, no matter how hopeless."

"I'll go with you," snapped Pedro, the Crusader.

"And I."

"And I."

It swept the crowding dogs like wild-fire. Muzzles up, they voiced growling agreement. Only Gordon Keil held aloof.

Chet saw him.

"How about you?"

The Doberman-Pinscher shook his head in the negative.

"I'll stay. You see," he added simply. "I love Dea Kirke."

They surged toward him angrily.

"Traitor!" howled Sir Sagamore.

"You would betray us."

"Never! Go your ways in peace. I wish you luck. But she has given me such joy as I had never known before. I am willing to pay the price for it."

"Leave him alone," cried Chet. "I understand his feelings. He won't betray us."

"Thank you!" answered Keil gratefully.

"The question is now—how to get out."

"That's the trouble!" groaned Pedro. "The walls are higher than we can possibly jump. And they're surmounted by barbed wire and broken glass."

"How about the gate?"

"Atlas himself is the guardian."

"All the time?"

"During the day, at any rate. At night it's bolted and chained." The Crusader twisted his muzzle. "We have only paws with which to work."

Chet pondered. "It's a chance just the same—at night. What are we supposed to do during the day?"

"Eat and drink and roam the park," grunted Ennius. "Thus our muscles keep in trim, our coats get sleeker, and we win more prizes for our mistress. There's food all over the place. In little troughs. Phemus tends to that."

A thought struggled in Chet's reddish head.

"Hmm! I wonder if the food doesn't contain drugs that renew the potency of the transformation. However—in the meantime, we'd better scatter. Each for himself until dark. No use getting Circe suspicious—or the others. When the first star breaks out, let's meet at—"

"I know just the place," declared Ennius. "There's a thick cluster of pines hard by the gate. Even when the sun is overhead, the shadows are heavy within."

"Okay, then, boys! Until then . . .

THE day was long in passing. Chet flitted stealthily from tree to shadowed tree, keeping warily out of sight. Occasionally he met one of the other dogs and pretended not to know him. Just in case anyone was spying. Twice he saw Atlas sunning himself at the gate. He peered at him out of shelter, wondering. This little old man, bald and wrinkled with innumerable years—could he actually be the same as that monstrous being who had stalked with earthquake tread over the ground the night before?

Then he saw Jessica and Strang leaving in Jessica's cream-colored roadster. Strang looked more perplexed than ever. Jessica was biting her lip with a certain fierceness. It was obvious that she was keeping back her tears with the utmost difficulty. Chet's heart yearned toward her; yet he dared not emerge from his hiding.

Atlas opened the gate and they whirled through. For a moment Chet thought to leap after them, scurry through before the gate could close again. But his dog-sharpened senses showed him something that human sight could not envisage. A shimmer of impalpable form that radiated from the little old man, and extended on all sides to block all openings. A radiation through which human beings and inanimate metal could pass as through a fog; yet impenetrable to Circe's transformed slaves. Then the gate closed; and Jessica was gone!

Twice he passed little troughs of food and drink. He was hungry and thirsty, and the odor that came to his snuffing nostrils was insupportably tempting. Twice he passed them by, fearing the potent drug; then hunger and thirst could bear no more—and he ate greedily.

No condemned prisoner ever watched more tensely for the dawn than

did Chet for that first pale, twinkling star. As sun dropped down over the hills and twilight strode over the earth, he lay on his belly, paws outstretched, secure in his covert, and sought its apparition. Even as the light dimmed, a strange transformation overtook Atlas. The old man in his robe of stars and crescents began to gather around him the shimmer of vibrations that had enclosed him. They coalesced and expanded at the same time. Up and up and up shot his legs and thighs and widening trunk. Chet whined softly to himself and shivered as though it were bitter cold. Strongly he was tempted to jerk to his legs and run howling. It was only by tremendous effort that he held himself to watch.

Atlas got up, and at once his head vanished high into the night. He seemed a vast, amorphous, headless being stalking the earth with thunder-claps. Somewhere to the right of him, Chet heard a little whimper. Ennius, the St. Bernard, lying in wait, was equally affected.

Then a huge mastiff bounded suddenly into the clearing next the gate. Chet started. That was Ulysses. He had not seen him all the day in the course of his peregrinations. Chet's hackles rose. He growled low. An answering growl of hate came from Ennius. They wished nothing better than to rush the favored one and tear him to pieces. But Atlas was there.

And even as they tensed, the mastiff blurred and flowed. Then the dog was gone and Ulysses, the man, stood in his place.

HE cupped his hand, called softly but urgently up into the gloom.

"Father Atlas! Father Atlas!"

From out of space itself seemed to come the rumble.

"What is it, Ulysses?"

"It's about Kirk-ee. Since that damned new toy of hers—Chetworth Bailey—struck her fancy, she will have nothing more to do with me. In spite of the compact we made and which you witnessed."

"You changed her into a pig," Atlas pointed out. "That's the unforgivable sin as far as any woman is concerned."

"She brought it upon herself. She wanted to put that Bailey chap in my place. I haven't been around her all these years for nothing. I know just where she keeps her drugs."

The great voice floated down meditatively.

"She wants me to crush you into oblivion, Ulysses."

"You won't do that, will you?" said the man in some alarm.

A chuckle permeated earth and sky.

"No. You are an amusing fellow. The most amusing I have met since Herakles himself once tricked me." The chuckle deepened. "That didn't matter, because I tricked him first. But Kirk-ee wants your life. She's like her mother in that respect. Vindictive." His sigh sounded like the north-wind. "These women. Old as I am, wise with the wisdom of many worlds, I still find it difficult to fathom them."

Ulysses shook his head despondently. "Isn't it the truth? Look at me; I was supposed to be the wisest of the Greeks. I outwitted your Kirk-ee the first time I met her. Then I sailed on home to Penelope. Poor Penelope. She was the only woman I've ever known to be faithful for ten absent years. Yet she bored me. I thought always of Kirk-ee. I grew restless. At last the restlessness seized me by the hair and wouldn't let me be. I took some of my old retainers and set sail again. I was willing to pay the price. So now I'm dog by day and man by night." He shook his head. "It isn't pleasant by any manner of

means; yet—" he added hastily, "I love that darn witch you call your daughter so much I've stuck it out for centuries."

"My boy," said Atlas kindly, "I understand just how you feel. If Kirk-ee weren't my daughter, I'd—" The great voice trailed off in a spatter of wind. "I'll see what I can do for you, Ulysses. If she insists, I'll have to kill you. But I'll talk to her. 'Bye."

The great legs lifted, came down with measured tread. The earth vibrated. The Fordham seismological needle jumped several notches. Georgetown recorded the tremor. Scientists spoke learnedly the next morning of unsuspected faults that underlay the Westchester hills. The legs moved on, up the slope toward the castle, and disappeared.

Even as they did, the first pale star winked into being.

At the signal, the night became a thing of rustles and stealthy movements. Ulysses, leaning against the gate, lost in contemplation, did not hear them until the pack was almost upon him. Sir Sagamore leaped. A rumble of hate stirred in his throat.

ULYSSES swiveled sharply; cried out. He was defenceless, alone, against an army of assorted dogs who once had been men.

Chet barked once.

"Stop it, Sir Sagamore!"

The Great Dane skidded reluctantly to a halt. His long teeth clashed.

"What's the matter, Bailey? Getting soft?"

"No. It's just that an idea struck me. We could never open that gate with our unaided paws. But Ulysses, with human hands—"

The old Greek stared at the Irish setter, let his eyes wander slowly around the circle of animals that panted for his life.

"Bailey has brains," he nodded with a touch of admiration. "More than the rest of you put together."

The weaving pack snarled.

"He is quite right," Ulysses went on imperturbably. "You could tear me to pieces, without doubt. But what good would it do you? The gate would still be closed, and my death cries would attract Kirk-ee and Atlas. You know what that would mean to you."

"Never mind the speeches," interrupted Chet. "Open the gate, or your death cries will be extremely short."

Ulysses sighed.

"No wonder the witch with whom I have the misfortune to be infatuated, has taken a liking to you. Under other circumstances I would be glad to have you for a friend. Just now, however, you are a rival. So I'll be glad to comply with your desires, my good fellow. Once you are escaped—and the rest with you—perhaps she'll be willing to return to my arms."

He went slowly to the gate, slipped open the complicated series of bolts and bars, tumbled the massive locks. The huge barrier swung out.

"Goodbye," he mocked them, "and good luck in the world of men. There is a Society, I believe, that takes up all strays and kills them in the name of mercy and all that."

Pedro, the Dalmatian, had shot through ecstatically. Now he turned, his tail stiff with fury.

"For that last crack we ought to tear you to pieces anyway."

But Chet, his muzzle close to the gibing man, said:

"Let him alone. Ulysses always was noted for his jests. If his life depended on it, he couldn't resist the last word."

"How well you know me!" laughed the Greek.

"One more thing, though. How can we change back to human beings?"

Ulysses looked grave. A twitch of pain passed over his weather-beaten face.

"I do not know," he confessed. "For two thousand years I've labored to obtain the secret. Do you think," he demanded passionately, "that I wouldn't have employed it for myself? Do you think I *like* to be a mastiff by day?" He pulled himself together. "Not even Kirk-ee knows. It's a one-way transformation as far as she is concerned. Perhaps Atlas knows. And *he* has never yet yielded the secret."

Chet thought of that age-old giant and shivered. It would be like plucking a secret out of the heart of the molten stars. However, for the present it was necessary to be free. They must hurry. At any moment Atlas might return and their escape be discovered.

"I'll get it somehow," he told the Greek confidently. Then he turned to the waiting pack. "All right, boys, let's get moving."

They poured through the gate in a torrential flood—scores of assorted dogs—snuffing the freedom that lay ahead. Chet took the lead—no one disputed it with him. At his side trotted Ennius, the St. Bernard.

"Where away?" grunted Ennius.

"To New York. I live in a private house on Sixty-Fifth—relic of palmier days. We'll use that as a hideout until we determine what to do."

ALL through the night the motley horde poured on its way. At first they kept to the main highways, but the hard concrete was too much for their travel-weary paws, and passing automobiles were a menace. Brakes squealed and men shouted at first in anger and then in fear and astonishment as they hurriedly shifted back into gear. A hundred loping animals—from the largest to the smallest—headed by a

gorgeous Irish setter, a giant St. Bernard, a spotted Dalmatian and a savage-looking Great Dane, were not lightly to be trifled with.

"I wish they'd give us a ride," a water spaniel said wistfully. "My dogs are awful tired." The spaniel had been a mail carrier on a rural free delivery route just after the War.

"Dogs?" queried Sir Sagamore, puzzled. "We're all dogs."

"Skip it," Chet advised. "Poor Miller was just trying out a modern pun. There'll be no rides for any of us, except back—" he added grimly. "We'd better cut across fields wherever possible. That way we won't attract as much attention, and the ground will be easier."

But Chet had never had a dog's-eye view of the suburbs of New York before. Grounds were fenced in, or barred with barbed wire. Picnickers smashed pickle jars, milk bottles, strewn around jaggedly open tin cans and went gaily on their way. Grass was sharp stubble and defunct automobile bodies littered the open spaces.

Back to the roads they were forced. The smaller dogs began to limp. The larger ones sagged wearily. Paws were cut and bleeding.

"How much further?" gasped Pedro. Chet lifted his head and sniffed. The garbage dumps were increasing in odor.

"About ten or twelve more miles to my home," he said cheerily.

Groans and whines met him.

"Can't make it," yipped Miller, the spaniel. "I'd rather stay here and let Dea Kirke catch us. At least we ate and slept and enjoyed ourselves up there."

There were agreeing growls.

"Well," commenced Chet, and was interrupted. Sirens screamed through the night. The sound traveled fast, rising in crescendoing pitch. Head-



lights widened swiftly to boring tunnels of flame. Men were shouting.

"By Jupiter and the Vestal Virgins!" quavered Ennius. "What is that?"

"Duck!" screamed Chet. "Take to the fields and scatter. Don't stop running until you're under cover. They're State troopers. An alarm's been sent out for us."

A long, white car hurtled toward them like a ghost. Others converged down the pale concrete.

"There they are!" yelled a gray-uniformed man perched on a running board. A gun was in his hand. "No wonder the complaints were pouring in. There must be a hundred of them. Wild dogs, hunting in a pack. Okay, Bill. Start shooting!"

The escaped animals were milling inconclusively on the edge of the road. But at his words, at the warning cry that Chet raised again in loud, staccato barks, they scattered.

Guns blazed, the night was filled with punctuated bursts of sound. The spaniel, Miller, yelped in pain and dragged a bleeding leg into the field. A dachshund, once a chef in Bismarck's kitchen, jumped convulsively and rolled over, twitching and jerking.

MAD with terror, the pack catapulted like a bursting dam for cover. Chet and Ennius raced together, the breath whistling in their shaggy breasts.

"Make for that clump of trees and that barn," puffed Chet.

The troopers jumped from their cars, and plunged after the fleeing dogs. The night was filled with explosions.

"Got another one!" yelled a cop. "Boy! I useta gun coyotes like this."

The St. Bernard threw himself behind the shelter of the silent barn just as a vagrant bullet clipped his ear. Chet flung beside him.

"We'd better lie low," Chet advised. "They're crisscrossing the fields with their car headlights."

Muzzles close to the ground, they waited. Impotent wrath and anguish mingled in their pumping hearts. The level field was a scurry of motion, of yelping, maddened animals. White beams pricked them out as they fled, and gun roar promptly followed. A waddling bulldog—Heatherington-Smythe-Fortescue of Wupping on the Cam—fell heavily. His short, bowed legs beat a feeble tattoo, then stiffened to the skies.

"Damn them!" raged Chet. "I'll never hunt another living thing as long as I live. They're killing us off one by one."

"Most of them got away," growled Ennius. "I used to hunt the tusked boar in the Hyrcanian forests, but I'll never do it again either. That is," he amended, "if we ever get clear of this mess."

Far up the road two small points of light pricked out; then expanded into whizzing grooves of sheeted flame. A high-ceiled limousine, powerful with sixteen cylinders, roared down upon the cluster of police cars like a bat out of hell.

Brakes squealed in sudden torment; the great car rocked to a halt, and a woman flung out from the rear. The chauffeur, vague and formless in the front seat, was cloaked in darkness. No light gleamed on the dashboard.

Chet whistled, and it emerged as a soft whine.

"It's Dea Kirke—Circe herself!" Ennius stiffened, reared on his paws. "We'd better run for it, then," he said in fright. "That hellcat'll spot us sure as the Fates."

"Sssh!" Chet whispered. "Get down again. Listen to her!"

The troopers had stopped shooting.

A grizzled sergeant jerked toward her.

"Hey, there, you! Where did you think *you* were going? You were doing ninety or I'm a Dutch uncle. I've a good mind tuh—"

She descended on them like an embodiment of all the Furies. Her lovely face blazed with terrible wrath; her dark eyes flamed like Etna in eruption.

"You fools! You unutterable fools! Don't you know who I am? I'm Dea Kirke. Those are my dogs you're slaughtering—thoroughbreds, world prize-winners, every one. A hundred thousand of your silly dollars couldn't replace them."

**T**HEY fell back from her rage at first. Then the sergeant took himself in hand.

"Sure, I recognize you, Miss Kirke," he mumbled. "I seen your picture lotsa times in the paper. But you shouldn't a let 'em out."

"Let them out?" she flared. "They escaped. The gate had somehow been left open. I'm holding you strictly responsible for any damage you've done."

The sergeant clothed himself in official dignity. After all, orders were orders and the law was the law.

"You ain't got no call to talk like that, Miss Kirke," he said with aggrieved dignity. "Them dogs've been scarin' people outa their wits. They's been 'bout a hundred complaints poured in afore we was sent out. They're a menace—that's what they are—a menace. An' the law—Section 24, Subdivision a, of the —"

"I don't care what your silly old laws say," she interrupted furiously. "You leave my dogs alone."

The sergeant took out his little book.

"Okay, lady, you asked for it. I'm gonna give ya a summons fer interferin' wid officers in the pursuit of their

duty; an' I'm gonna give that big ape of a chauffeur a ticket fer speedin', reckless driving—"

"Phemus!"

"Coming, Kirk-ee."

The giant unfolded himself and lumbered out of the car. His single eye glared hopefully.

"Do you want me maybe to take these insects apart, limb by limb?"

The sergeant fell back. The book of tickets thudded to the concrete. His gun came out again, but the sweat beaded down from the brim of his gray Stetson.

"You keep away from me, Big Boy, or I'll blast yuh."

"Jeez!" husked a trooper, his gun-hand shaking. "I heard uh that bozo. Must be seven feet, if he's an inch. An' lookit those eyes. He oughta be in a circus. Onct, when I was a kid, I saw a guy—"

His companion was pale, but he wrinkled his brow nevertheless with unaccustomed thought.

"Gwan, yuh never saw nothing like that before. But onct, when I had the mumps, my mother read me from a book. Somethin' about a feller named Odd—Oddy—well, anyway, he met up with a guy just like this here one, an' he put out his eyes wid a burning stick."

"Me, I'd rather use a gat," retorted his fellow.

Phemus was spreading his great hams of hands and looking joyfully around the backing cops.

"Shall I, Kirk-ee?" he rumbled.

"I'm warnin' yuh again," yelled the sergeant fearfully. "We got yuh covered."

Dea Kirke made an impatient gesture.

"Never mind, Phemus. Go back to your seat. I'll handle this."

"Yeah?" The sergeant gained confidence. "Well, now let me tell you

somethin'. I'm runnin' yuh both in. I don't care if you're God Almighty; yuh can't get away with this. Okay, Peters, put the cuffs on 'em."

Peters moved forward unwillingly, shiny metal dangling in his fingers. Dea shrank back.

"Don't you dare touch me!" she screamed. Phemus let out a bellow.

But the circle narrowed on them relentlessly. Guns watched for the slightest untoward move.

"It's no good, lady," grunted the sergeant. "Yuh'd better come quietly."

"Father Atlas!" she lifted her voice.

"It's no use. Atlas or whoever he is can't do nothing. He ain't got no influence in this here country. Only Atlas I ever heard of is the Atlas Insurance Company of Hartford, and they don't insure cases like this. Ha! ha!"

He doubled up at his own jest; then stopped on a hiccupping spasm.

"What the hell's that?"

THE ground shook and rocked underfoot. It heaved and sideswayed like a sea swelling toward a rocky shore. The trees bent and the branches swished like whips; the barn behind which Chet and Ennius lay hid did a stately sarabande.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Great feet slogging up and down in measured, thundering tread, approaching through the night, relentless, inexorable. Huge steps pounding out an earthquake rhythm, stepping hills as though they were pebbles, striding along with seven-league boots. The sound of houses crashing underfoot, of toppling trees and squashed-out filling stations, grew louder and louder. A wind sprang up, whirling and twisting with cyclonic strength.

The police shrank against their swaying prow-cars, white of face, mouths unslacked.

"Jeez!" husked the sergeant. "What the hell—"

"Look, sarge!" screamed Peters. "Lookit that comin' toward us!"

Surmounting the encompassing slopes of the Saw Mill River Valley were two giant legs. Round and thick they were as the Trylon at its base. Up into the darkling sky they reared, supporting a torso that bulked as huge as the Empire State Building. Black, storm-streaked clouds hid the rest, boiling in a cauldron of crackling lightnings and pitchy swirls.

"I come, daughter Kirke!"

The great voice was like a clap of thunder, smashing down from outer space.

Ennius cowered against Chet for protection. His shaggy pelt was stiff with fear.

"It's Father Atlas! By all the Lares and Penates, we're cooked!"

With a quavering howl the St. Bernard started up and fled across the staggering field, straight toward the swaying woods that rimmed it in.

"Don't!" Chet yelled after him. But Ennius had already disappeared; as had all their company except those pitiful few who lay stiff and cold on the ground, their dark, red blood fertilizing next year's crop of weeds.

Chet's fangs were chattering, but he kept his head. It was safer here than in panic-stricken flight. If Atlas would only—

The police broke with hoarse yells. They tumbled pellmell into their cars, slewed them around on the shuddering road. Starters whanged, gears clashed raucously. Five white cars, like bucking broncos, leaped forward, whining and tumbling in crazy flight toward New York. Behind them rang out the silvery, musical laughter of Dea Kirke and the bellowing guffaws of Phemus.

"Ho! ho!" he doubled over, while the tears gushed in a fountain from his saucer eye. "I ain't had so much fun since my brother Poly hopped around blind mad when we asked him who put out his blinker. 'Noman!' he kept on howling, an' got madder 'n madder cause we said: 'Then what's eatin' you if no man hurt yuh?'"

A fence splintered into smithereens close by. The giant legs came to a halt. The wind died down. Giant as Phemus was, he seemed gnome-like against sky-piercing Atlas. A huge voice boomed down; a little weary, a little anxious.

"My daughter called. What manner of trouble had she gotten into now?"

CIRCE stamped her foot in a rage. "It's these modern boors of humans! They no longer fear the gods, or respect our immortal superiority."

"You mean," said Atlas, "that the goddess Kirkee has been crossed again in one of her whims. I told you a thousand years ago that changing humans into pigs and dogs and whatnot is passé. Try something new to sate your eternal boredom."

The woman flung back a defiant head. She was breathtaking in her passionate loveliness.

"Please, Father Atlas. None of your moral lessons. I had enough of them from Zeus. He'd sneak away from that old frump of a wife, Hera, and loll in my arms, and talk high and mighty about duty and respect for his position and all that."

"That's why you came back to your Titan father," Atlas chuckled. "You played the winning side with Zeus until Hera found out about you, and you needed my protection again." The clouds bellied with his sigh. "I'm an old man and foolish to put up with your pranks, Kirkee; but I suppose it's too

late to change. First it was your mother; now it's you. I'll never get any peace. What do you want now?"

"Get my dogs back again. Especially I want the Irish setter, Chet Bailey."

"All right! all right!" he grumbled. "If it will make you happy. But you've got to do something about Ulysses. The poor fellow's in a dither."

"Kill him. He changed me into a pig."

"But you always were, my dear. Greedy, lecherous, wallowing in—"

"Father!"

"Okay!" he said hastily. "I was only joking. But I won't kill Ulysses. After all, a contract is a contract. Us Titans have a sense of honor."

"Sure," Dea told him nastily. "That's why you let Zeus and his Olympians finagle you out of your kingdom. *They* didn't worry about contracts."

"They didn't," Atlas admitted. "But if I'm too old to put a stop to your tantrums, I'm too old to change my ideas on honor. Ulysses lives."

She knew when she was licked.

"Very well, father. I don't care if he lives to a hundred thousand. But I want Chet Bailey."

"I'll find him," he promised. "Now you let Phemus drive you home, and leave everything to me."

CHET thought it was time to be going. He didn't like Dea's single-track insistence upon him. He would have preferred less of her interest and more of anonymity, such as Ennius, or Pedro, or Sir Sagamore possessed. She was lovely enough, God knew, but she did not tempt him. Not if she were a million times lovelier. More and more he yearned for the normal humanity of Jessica, for the candid clearness of her eyes. He'd never have to worry, when he took her in his arms, that he might

possibly be holding a squealing, snout-ing sow.

He sneaked along, belly low to the ground, as the big limousine went roaring back the way it had come. The others were all safe by now, and he figured he'd wriggle quietly to the little cluster of beeches and get the wind up on Ennius. He had taken a liking to the honest old centurion. Together with the Roman, he'd be able to . . .

A gigantic shadow fell athwart his path, blotted out the moon and all the stars. The shadow had five curved fingers, each a dozen feet in length.

Abandoning all concealment, he started to run. His four legs jackknifed under him, and his lean, glossy body hurtled forward like a streamlined bullet. But fast as he was, the shadow was faster.

It swooped down out of the sky; a hand plucked him up, wriggling and kicking with his hind legs, as easily as if he were a fly scooped up by an eagle in flight.

Up, up he zoomed, the breath knocked flat out of him. He lay in the palm of a hand as huge almost as the Yale Bowl. The earth fell away from him and the clouds seemed to descend to meet him. Up, up, up! In the distance New York shimmered, a toy city spangled with chains of light. The Hudson was a ribbon far beneath to the right, with dwarf Palisades making a tiny edging. On the left the Sound was a mere sinuous trickle.

Up, up, up! It became biting cold. Even his matted fur could not shield him from the piercing wind. The clouds parted, and closed again beneath him.

"Up, up, up! The stars were white radiances in a jetblack sky. His lungs labored and panted in the thin air. He ceased his strugglings. If he fell now . . .

The dizzy zooming ceased. All mo-

tion stopped. Sucking in as much of the cold, clear atmosphere as he could, he staggered cautiously to his feet. He looked upward.

For a moment he closed his eyes; then he opened them again. Atlas looked down upon the shivering setter he held in the palm of his hand. His great face was like the moon. Its wrinkles would have been good-sized hills down there on Earth. His eyes were twin lakes of jet, nestling in mountain troughs. His nose was a bold promontory, a headland that raised the wind with its steady breathing. When his mouth opened, a red pit yawned in which white teeth made a saw-tooth range. Chet, in that first shuddering gulp, noted that dark chasms ran across the white. Atlas needed a superjob of dentistry, he thought incongruously.

"Well, my friend," roared Atlas. "You thought I did not know you were hiding behind that barn all the time. What have you to say for yourself?"

CHET stiffened his muscles against the shuddering that was half cold, half fear.

"It's *you* who have to do the saying," he declared boldly. "I've harmed no one. I minded my own human business until that daughter of yours took it into her head to change me into a dog. That sort of thing went out centuries ago. You're both anachronisms today with such silly tricks. You ought to stop it."

Bracing himself firmly on the ridged palm, Chet waited for the explosion of wrath that would send him catapulting into a squashed mess of blood and intestines back to Earth.

But the explosion didn't come. The bald giant—now that Chet looked closer, he noted the resemblance to the little old man in the spangled gown—

stared down at the dog meditatively. His brow puckered into Appalachian folds.

"You've got spirit," he said finally. "I'll give you credit for that. And I don't know but what you are right. I've been telling practically the same thing to Kirkee for a long time. But she's a headstrong girl. She pays no more attention to me than did her mother." His eyes twinkled and he heaved a false sigh. "Her mother left me for good-looking Hermes after the time us Titans got licked."

Chet took heart. Atlas looked like a mild old giant, in spite of his fearsome size.

"Now look here, Atlas," he said earnestly. "Sooner or later, you're going to get into trouble on account of Circe. This isn't Greece any more, you know, or even Rome. Civilization has gone ahead. You can't go around forever changing people into animals. You'll be found out some day; and then the men of Earth will turn their weapons loose on you. Airplanes, bombers, guns that shoot twenty miles, battleships, explosive bullets. And then where will you be?"

"Hmmm!" pondered Atlas. "Civilization *has* advanced some, hasn't it? Why, even the Olympians had only trumpery thunderbolts to mow us down. You fellows could kill hundreds of thousands where Zeus could smack down only a single Titan. That sure is progress!"

Chet did not like the tone of irony in which this was said. He arched his back, showed his teeth, and growled defensively.

"You don't have to get sarcastic like that, Atlas. We've done other things—like—like science, for instance."

The giant stroked his chin with his free hand.

"Science! Sure! So you can make

bigger and better weapons to kill more and more people!"

Chet decided there was no profit in arguing against such silly logic. Besides, it was pretty chilly in those rarefied heights, and it was hard to breathe.

"Well, what are you going to do to me?" he demanded suddenly.

"Eh, what's that?" Atlas blinked his eyes. His thoughts had been far away. "Why, yes, of course. Take you back to Kirkee, naturally. You're the latest of her series of toys."

"But I don't want to go back," Chet declared anxiously. "I don't want to stay a dog all my life."

"I don't know why not. It's not a bad life, come to think of it. Some one takes care of your food and drink. You have time to stretch in the sun and laze. No responsibilities! No headaches! Besides, you'll be a man during the day; dog at night; and immortal to boot.

"Now, *that's* an idea. Why didn't I think of it before? You won't even interfere with Ulysses. He'll take the night shift and you'll make love to my daughter by day. She'd like that, I'll be bound. Her mother, for instance . . . Well, never mind that. Come on, everything's settled; and even that contract I was idiot enough to let Ulysses hornswoggle me into is taken care of. There's nothing in the lines against a *day* shift."

He took a giant stride and the wind of his movement almost sent Chet parachuting out into space.

"Hey! Wait a minute!" he yelped. "You don't understand. It's not only that it would be a dog's life, but I don't *love* your daughter."

ATLAS stopped and blinked in surprise.

"Eh, what's that? You don't love Kirk-ee." He scratched his head, puz-

zled. "But that has never happened yet. Every mortal being she ever wanted to take up with, and lots that she didn't give a hoot for, were just crazy about her. Look at Ulysses—"

"I'm tired of looking at him," Chet declared angrily. "Sure," he added with a placating gesture, "Circe is a swell girl, and all that. I'm not saying anything against her looks or her methods—but—well, you see—I'm already in love. In fact, Jessica and I were supposed to get married as soon as I made some money."

Atlas stared at him.

"You mean that pale-faced snip that came a-hunting for you with that fat little detective?"

Chet showed his teeth in a snarling growl.

"Look here, I won't have anyone talking like that about Jessica. She's the grandest kid—"

"No harm meant," Atlas soothed. "It's just that—oh, Hades! I suppose every man has the right to love the girl he wants. After all I *did* have a hankering for Kirke's mother before I married her."

"Will you let me go, then?" Chet demanded eagerly.

"I'll get the dickens from Kirke."

"Tell her you couldn't find me."

"She won't believe me." Atlas winked a cavernous eye. "So she *won't*! It's about time she was denied something. The trouble is, I've spoiled her."

Chet's heart bounded incredulously. He had never expected to find the giant so reasonable. Already the gigantic hand was lowering. Cloud masses beaded his fur with milky moisture.

"Hey, wait a minute!" Atlas ejaculated, and paused. "You must remember you're a dog. The drink Ulysses switched on you both had the property of making all mortals dogs

and immortals into that animal they most closely resembled." He chuckled. "No wonder poor Kirke got so furious. Anyhow, it would take another drug to make you into half a man—a part-time man, so to speak."

"I'm not interested in that," Chet retorted. "I want to become *all* man again."

There was a moment's silence above him. Then Atlas said sadly,

"I'm afraid that's beyond any of us."

"W-what!" Chet stammered, feeling suddenly cold within. "You mean we can never change back to human form again?"

"I'm afraid that's so."

"But Ulysses compelled Circe to get his men back from pigs—Homer definitely says so."

"Homer was a poet—and therefore something of a liar. It's true that Hermes gave him an herb that had the property of re-transformation. But the herb doesn't exist any more. It grew only on Olympus, and when the gods emigrated, they took it with them." He pulled on his chin reflectively. "Let me see, what was its name? Oh, yes—*moly*."

Chet's heart sank.

"Then we'll have to find Hermes."

"No, sir, you can't," retorted Atlas hastily. "In the first place, they emigrated to a different world where the people still believe in them. In the second place my wife went along, and I don't want her to get ideas. The last couple of millenia have been pretty calm and restful, and if she decided to come back—" The giant was sweating. Down below, on Earth, it began to rain, much to the Weather Bureau's surprise. Their charts didn't show any reason for it.

"Then how—?"

"It's just too bad, son," Atlas said sympathetically. "But you have your

choice. Man by day and dog by night—and Kirke; or else, just plain dog *all* the time."

Chet twitched his muzzle; breathed deeply.

"Okay, then; I'll take the dog's life." He gritted his teeth. "I'll find that *moly* if I have to go to Hell for it."

"That won't be far enough," Atlas remarked. "However, it's your funeral."

The great hand went swiftly down. "I'll drop you off in Central Park, if you want."

"Thanks!"

A loitering policeman, a sleepy watchman and two mooning lovers afterward reported that New York had been attacked by a strange Zeppelin that had swooped perilously close to them, had changed its mind and zoomed back into space.

They did not note in their excitement the Irish setter that shook itself a moment or two on the sward to get its land legs again, and then trotted off in the direction of Fifth Avenue.

JESSICA WARE had passed a sleepless night. At the first sign of dawn she got up, washed her face, stared at herself in the mirror. Her eyes were tear-reddened and her face was pale with worry. Chet had vanished! The police were busy combing New York, were making inquiries. Nothing would come of them; as nothing had come of the uproar raised by the disappearance of half a dozen men before.

"I'm still certain it's that awful Kirke woman," she had insisted to Detective Strang the evening before. "Everyone of them had been visiting her before—before—"

Strang twiddled his derby unhappily.

"Maybe!" he sighed. "But we can't prove a thing. The other bozos all came back to their homes."

"But Chet didn't."

"We don't know. He lived by himself. No maid; nothin'." He scratched his head. "We searched Miss Kirke's place like we was a dose of salts. No corpus delicti; no hide nor hair."

Jessica started to cry afresh now; then, with the woman's instinct even in the midst of tragedy, she began to powder her nose. Then she stopped.

There seemed to be some commotion down in the street. A dog barking furiously, raising the dawn with its din.

"I wish the neighbors wouldn't let out their pets so early," she thought resentfully. "It's barely six o'clock. Suppose I had been asleep." And she lifted her compact to apply a little rouge to her cheeks. A tearful night did things to one's complexion.

The dog kept on barking.

She went to the window, flung out an exasperated "*Scat!*"; returned to her dressing.

But the barking grew louder, more insistent. Something began to scratch at the door.

Windows were being flung open; sleepy, embittered voices demanded to know why the hell she didn't let her dog back in to the house instead of waking up respectable, God-fearing citizens. What was the neighborhood coming to anyway?

Jessica made an explosive little sound, thrust a wrap around her bare shoulders, went to the window again.

"It's not my dog!" she cried out generally. "Call the police—"

Then her eyes dropped to the stoop.

THE East Sixtieths were still a refuge of aristocracy; an oasis of quietly ancient families in a city of roaring vulgarity. A chastely grille-enclosed stoop led up to a fan light doorway of Colonial design. Bounding up against the immaculate white paint, its long



red-glinting paws scratching furiously for admittance, its muzzle lifted in urgent, raucous barks, was a dog.

"Scat!" said Jessica. "Go away, or I'll—"

The dog lifted its head. Its long, sleek, reddish body writhed with redoubled, crescendoing howls. From a neighboring house a man shouted angrily:

"By God, I'm getting my gun!"

A shock of recognition flowed over Jessica.

"Heavens!" she gasped. "It's the Irish setter; the one that was so friendly to me yesterday; the one that wanted to kill its mistress. What's it doing—"

She gathered up her wrap, fled hastily down the stairs, her dainty mules clack-clacking on the steps. She reached the door almost simultaneously with Amanda her coal-black maid. Amanda said with sleepy irritableness:

"Sho', Miss Jess'ca, a body kaint sleep wif all that tarnation racket. Lemme git a broom—"

"Go away, Amanda!" Jessica said quickly. "I'll take care of the poor animal."

Trembling fingers undid the latch, twisted the knob. The Irish setter flung inside with a joyous clamor, muzzled her hand with soft, wet nose.

"Fer de lan' sakes!" mouthed Amanda, retreating hastily. "What you all doin', chile, lettin' strange animals in de house?"

"Hush!" said Jessica, and banged the door shut. She wanted to think; to have privacy. What did this apparition of one of Dea Kirke's dogs in front of her house mean? How did it get there? Why did she feel a queer little tingle trembling up and down her spine every time the setter pressed close to her? And its eyes—great, lustrous, speaking eyes? What message were

they trying to deliver?

Meanwhile Amanda had retrieved the morning paper. Her eyes widened on the bold, black headlines.

"Dogs! Mo' dogs! Whut's de world comin' to?"

Jessica snatched the paper from her hands. There, in screaming type, was the story. *Million Dollar Kennel Escapes! Terrorize Countryside!*

The girl sniffed. Just like the papers, to exaggerate. A million, indeed! Chet knew values—he estimated the Kirke woman's kennels at about a hundred thousand. The thought of Chet sent cold little ripples over her body. She read on.

It had been a night of terror, it seemed. First the dogs had broken out of carefully guarded precincts; just how, no one knew. Miss Kirke, noted beauty and world-famous breeder, had hinted of envious rivals. Then they had run in a wild pack over Westchester. Motorists had been attacked, homes raided, farmers barricaded in terror of their lives. The reporter was eloquent.

"Silent, slinking demons patrolled the roads; magnificent thoroughbreds reverted to the wolf and stalked their prey with all the finesse of their ancestors. A trail of slaughtered cows, sheep and barnyard fowl showed the bloody path they had taken. Fears are entertained for the safety of Lola Bell, aged six, of Armonk, and Frederick Samisch, of White Plains, aged five, both of whom are still missing.

"State troopers caught up with the ravenous horde during the night, and accounted for three of the animals, but the rest managed to escape and are still at large.

"To cap the climax of a night of terror, there were violent, but short-lived earthquake shocks recorded. Seismologists are at a loss. Their instru-

ments have recorded a series of disturbances during the last few months in the metropolitan area. All previous theories as to the foundations of New York must be revised. Los Angeles paper please copy!"

The article ended with a succinct sentence.

"The leader of the escaped pack seems to be an Irish setter. Miss Kirke declared it was the latest and finest member of her kennel. She offers a reward of ten thousand dollars for its return, no questions asked."

Jessica stared down at the dog with a startled cry. The setter whined softly. It was trying to tell her something; or so it appeared to the girl. Then it reached up, twitched the paper suddenly from her hand, and while she watched in astonishment, it straightened the folded page flat on the floor with its paw, and began to nose over the sheet with its muzzle.

"Why, it looks as if he's trying to read it!" Jessica gasped.

Amanda's eyes rolled. She backed away; then fled into the safety of her kitchen, mumbling strange things under her breath.

When the dog came to that last fatal sentence, it raised its head and shook it decisively, from side to side, in the negative.

"Of course I won't turn you in, old fellow," Jessica declared impulsively. "Even if the reward were a hundred thousand! You hated your mistress, didn't you?"

The dog's head jerked in the affirmative. Jessica put her hand up to her mouth. She had spoken without thinking. Yet the dog had understood. Or so she thought. Was she going mad? Animals didn't understand; not that way at any rate.

Cautiously she opened her mouth to

try again, when an authoritative pounding on the door interrupted her. The dog whirled around, stiff-legged, and growled.

She patted his trembling muzzle, went to the door, opened it.

Two prowl-car cops shouldered their way in.

"We've gotten complaints, ma'am. About a dog. You've got to keep him quiet, or else—"

The big, red-faced policeman cut off short. His eyes widened on the setter. Too late Chet realized his danger; he dived swiftly under a sofa.

"Holy cats!" gasped the red-faced one to his partner. "That there's the dog the reward's out for. Ten thousand bucks! Say-y-y!"

Too late Jessica also realized the danger. She confronted the cops with flashing eyes.

"You're entirely wrong, officer. There's more than *one* Irish setter in New York. That's my doy—uh—its name is Paddy. I've had him for over three years. Here, Paddy! Paddy!" Desperately she hoped the name was close enough to his real name for the dog to respond.

And sure enough the setter came slowly from beneath the couch, its eyes wary on the men in uniform. Jessica patted his head thankfully.

"There—you see?"

"I don't see," said the cop who had hitherto not opened his mouth. "If it's *your* dog, you've got a license. All yuh gotta do is produce the license. Lemme have it."

Jessica felt sick.

"Why—uh—" she stammered, "to tell you the truth, I haven't taken out a license yet. I had Paddy stopping in Connecticut."

"Oh, yeah!" sneered the perspicacious one. "Then we gotta take him in according to Section 66 of the Sanitary

Code relating tuh licenses." His big, beefy hand made a grab for the dog. "Come on, Fido. We're going places."

But Chet delivered himself of an ear-splitting yelp. His long, lean body twisted. His teeth sank into the outstretched hand.

"Ouch, yuh red devil!" screamed the afflicted one. "I'll—"

Chet let go, thunderbolted for the other cop who barred his way. The cop flung up his hand to protect his face. Chet dived for his spraddled legs and the man sat down suddenly and violently on the floor. The injured one was reaching for his gun.

But Chet was already through the open door. His tail tucked between his legs, his head was low and his four paws were churning pistons. By the time the wrathful cops had reached the door, he was already rounding a corner at express speed and showing a clean pair of heels to a sporting automobile that tried to pace him.

Jessica leaned weakly against a mantel, trying to stifle her laughter at the sight of the discomfited cops. Then she went rigid. There had been something funny about that dog; something that reminded her strangely of Chet. Her round, softly-molded chin firmed and a glint of determination came into her eyes. She'd find that dog again if she had to comb all New York!

CHET padded cautiously through the streets of New York, heading northward all the time. He was a hunted creature, and every man's hand would be turned against him to collect that reward. The memory of Jessica still had him jumpy. He had tried so hard to tell her, and had failed. Yet there had been moments when he saw in her eyes a startled awareness, a struggling response. Damn those cops, anyway! If it hadn't been for them he would even-

tually have succeeded. Then, with Jessica's car to carry him in safety all over the country—to Europe, if necessary—he might eventually have come across the mythical *moly*.

*Moly! Moly!* The name of the herb that could restore him to human-kind haunted him. It ran in strange rhythms across his brain. There was somewhere else he had come across the name, and it wasn't in Homer, either. Some place else! If only he could remember . . .

A lean, dried-out sort of man with a tooth brush mustache was supporting a wall while he read the newspaper. His eye happened to flick over the sagging edge and came to rest on Chet. His Adam's apple bobbed up so fast he almost choked. With a strangled ejaculation he darted for the bemused, half-trotting dog.

"Jeez!" he croaked. "C'mere, doggy."

Chet dodged just in time and fled. The disappointed man ran after him, the paper still clutched in his hand. He lost ground.

"Stop 'em!" he yelled. "Stop, thief!"

The cry was taken up by an early morning city. Passersby turned and joined the chase without quite knowing what it was all about. Police whistles shrilled. Taxi drivers forgot their fares and tooted their horns. Traffic jammed. Small boys let out gleeful yelps and followed.

The setter darted up Madison Avenue. The uproar raced after him. Some one shouted:

"Mad dog!"

A bullet caromed off the sidewalk close to his tail.

He ducked into a side street. Push cart peddlers were setting up their wares; fat, gesticulating women argued with them over prices. A bearded man made a grab for him, missed. He went

under a cart and out the other side. The cart lifted and turned over with a crash. Vegetables cascaded to the street. A too ripe maternelon burst open and showered a sturdy fishwife with decaying red juice. She screamed and promptly punched the bearded man in the eye. He retaliated in kind. Chet rounded Park Avenue and went scooting and panting to the north. Behind him the hue and cry widened and deepened.

A truck lumbered by, an empty moving van. Its rear board was down. Chet swerved into the street, gathered his powerful legs and jumped. His front paws scrabbled at the boards, found purchase, and pulled his writhing body into the cool and dark interior.

There he crouched, catching his breath. No one had seen him jump; the driver on the high front seat sang a bawdy song to himself as he rattled along. Around One Hundred and Eighteenth the crowd pelted, chasing a vanished dog. The truck headed over the bridge and into the Bronx.

Chet sighed and relaxed. New York was too hot for him now. Dea Kirke had known what she was doing when she had offered that tremendous reward. Every man, woman and child was turned into a potential enemy. He'd have to get back to the fields and woods of Westchester. He'd have to track down his comrades—the men of all ages who were in the same boat as he. Together they'd live off the land, raid henneries and pull down a cow occasionally—and keep out of the way of all humans.

Eventually they'd be caught, of course. But before that happened, he hoped to have worked out some plan. What it would be, he hadn't the slightest idea at the moment.

The van was going to a job, evidently. It bounced along Southern Boulevard,

turned west at Fordham, proceeded north again on Webster. Near Woodlawn it came to a halt in front of a dingy apartment house. Chet could hear the driver getting off. It was time for him to get off too, he decided.

He jumped lithely to the ground and shot into the cemetery just as the driver rounded the rear wheels. The man blinked.

"Well, I'm a green-swiggled toad!" he said. "Whoever heard of a dog stealing a ride?" Then he blinked again. "Hey!" he shouted.

But Chet was gone, and the man stood there, cursing his lousy luck. Ten thousand bucks had just slipped through his fingers.

NIGHTFALL found Chet footsore and weary near Bronxville. The day had been one of chases and alarms. He had lapped away his thirst in the Bronx River; but hunger mounted. And he had not run across any of his fellow-victims.

When it was quite dark he crept from the bushes in which he had crouched away the twilight hours. His craving for food was imperiously urgent now. He sniffed. His sensitive nostrils brought to him the odor of warm, palpitating meat. Chickens, in fact!

He crawled almost on his belly through the high grass toward the source of the appetizing smell. He forgot he was man, to whom the thought of killing and tearing to pieces raw flesh would have brought nausea. He was starved—and doggish instincts stirred in him.

The henhouse loomed ahead. It was clean and whitewashed, and perhaps a hundred hens clucked comfortably inside over the eggs that helped feed New York's millions. They were asleep now, with only an occasional cackle as they stirred and dreamed of the handsome

rooster in the neighboring yard.

Chet's hunger deepened as he padded warily toward the door. There would be a latch, of course, with a peg of wood to hold it in place. Enough to keep ordinary animals out; but not dogs who knew human ways. By standing upright, and manipulating the peg with one's paw . . .

The setter suddenly stiffened and crouched lower in the grass. Something was there ahead of him; something huge in the darkness and terrifying. Dog scent came to him. The shape reared up softly against the door, brought a tremendous paw to working on the latch. For the moment Chet's brain did not function adequately. *Another* dog pulling the same stunt he had intended?

Then the scent hit familiar synapses and awareness clicked. With a smothered, joyful growl he raced forward. The great dog whirled at his approach, jaws snapping.

"Ennius! You old son!" cried Chet.

The St. Bernard quivered; peered at the leaping setter.

"Chet Bailey!" he yelped. The two dogs pummeled each other joyously. "Praise to Apollo!" Ennius husked. "I thought it was all over with you. Where have you been?"

"It's a long story. But how about yourself?"

Ennius wrinkled his muzzle.

"I've been dodging all night and all day. I ran into that Crusader Dalmatian once, but we decided it was best to be each for himself. Less chance of getting caught. Just now," he ended sadly, "I could eat a dozen fat pullets."

"Sssh!" Chet whispered. "We'll be waking up the humans. I came here for the same purpose. Let's go."

Chet, as the lithier and lighter of the two, had no difficulty in working out the peg. Ennius's paw widened the door

softly. Inside, a chicken raised sleepy head and clucked in alarm. The others roused on their nests and flapped frantic wings.

Two great dark shapes bounded in. Two sets of eager jaws caught at plump, outstretched necks, and twisted. Frantic, clumsy bodies beat futile wings against them, filling the coop with feathers, lancing the night with cackling cries.

At the neighboring house lights sprang up. A man said sharply:

"By God, it must be those damn dogs! Where's the shotgun?"

CHET and Ennius did not wait.

Holding their limp prey firmly in their jaws, they bounded out into the open and raced for the neighboring bushes. Gun roar followed them, and the whistle of small pellets.

They did not stop until they had reached thick woods. Then they lay down, panting.

"You hurt?" called Chet anxiously.

The St. Bernard plucked feathers busily with his teeth; then crunched into steamy flesh with a growl of satisfaction.

"Something clipped my hair," he answered, mouth full, "but no damage done."

Chet felt better when only clean-picked bones bleached the ground. A stream washed down their thirst. They lay down on their paws and slept.

It was a little after midnight when they awoke.

"What now?" demanded Ennius. "We've eaten and we've drunk. We feel fine. But how long can this last? This is settled country. Sooner or later they'll close in on us—men with guns and other dogs to track us. We can't get away."

"Would you prefer to go back to Circe?" asked Chet.

The St. Bernard snarled.

"Never! Rather a single day of freedom—and then death; than immortality with that witch!"

"I feel the same way." Lying there in the silent darkness, with the wind rustling eerily in the trees and the stars glinting overhead through shifting patches of leaves, Chet told Ennius of his own adventures. "Now if we could only locate the herb—*moly*!" he concluded mournfully.

The Roman centurion scratched his side with reflective hind paw.

"Never heard of it," he growled. "But then, I never read Homer either. I wasn't much on Greek learning, anyway. The old Roman stories my mother used to tell me were good enough. But I could carve a Teuton in two with my short sword as well as the best of them."

Chet rubbed his muzzle in the cool dirt.

"Somewhere, somehow, I came across that word before Atlas used it. And it wasn't in Homer either."

"What good would it do to remember?"

The Irish setter got up and stretched.

"I don't know. But I have a queer, insistent feeling that it's important."

"In the meantime it doesn't solve our present problem," the practical St. Bernard pointed out. "How do we manage to keep from getting caught?"

"We could stow away on some truck that's heading for Maine or the Adirondacks. In those woods we'd find food and safety."

"Swell! Let's go then."

Chet shook his head.

"I don't intend remaining a dog forever. I've got to find that herb."

"Some chance!" grumbled the centurion. "According to what you say only Hermes knows about it; and *he's* shifted to some more congenial world. Do you expect to follow him?"

"Can't. Maybe the old gods of Olympus found out the secret of rocket ships, but we haven't caught up to them in that. No; that's not the answer."

The St. Bernard reared himself suddenly.

"How about Ulysses? He used it once to free his men."

"I asked him. I believe he's telling the truth. He doesn't know. According to Atlas all he got was a single sprig. That withered and died centuries ago."

"We might as well go to this here Maine business, then."

**B**UT Chet did not answer. He furrowed the loose folds on his forehead. His floppy ears twitched with frowning thought. He whined as if to himself.

"*Moly! Moly!* Damn! It runs in a rhythm all the time. As though I had learnt it when a kid in some passage; in some poem. If only I could remember!"

"You never will," Ennius told him sagely. "The harder you try, the more it will run from you. I once was given a countersign, just before we went to battle Ariovistus. In the darkness before dawn it was to be used to distinguish friend from foe. Well, would you believe it? I clean forgot the cursed word; and just when . . ."

Chet sprang to his feet.

"I got it! I got it!" he cried.

"Got what?" demanded Ennius sulkily. "The itch? Or fleas? I was just telling about—"

"Sorry!" apologized Chet. "But I just thought of a way to find that quotation that's been bothering me."

"Bah!" snuffled the St. Bernard. "I thought maybe you found the magic herb among the chicken feathers."

"Come on! We've got to find a library."

Ennius stared in amazement.

"Have the gods of lunacy gotten you finally? What in Hades do you want with a library?"

"To check over books of poetry. Once I'll see the name of the poet who wrote what I'm after, I'll remember the poem. Then I'll locate the line and—"

"Yah! Two dogs march into a library, ask for books, put on spectacles, read them wisely—and that's that."

But Chet was already moving swiftly through the trees. The St. Bernard, clumsier of build, crashed after him, grumbling to himself, yet sticking loyally to his comrade.

On the outskirts of Mt. Vernon they found a small public library. It was housed in a stone building with the inevitable inscription about the riches to be found in books carved upon its front. A street lamp illuminated the more important tablet on the barred and silent door. *Hours daily—9 A.M. to 5 P.M.*

It was about four in the morning now, and the eastern sky was beginning to pale.

"We can't break in there," sniffed Ennius. "Leastwise, not as dogs. What are we supposed to do now?"

"Wait until nine o'clock," crisped Chet. "I've got a plan. Look! There's an open cellar. We can hide in there until then."

It was damp and dark and musty with mice. The dawn swept over the earth and cars began to roll over the street. The milkman came with a clashing of bottles and a "Whoa, Dobbin!" Men issued from suburban homes, with paper bundles under their arms, and still blinking from interrupted sleep. Housewives in sleazy aprons and dustcaps on their unkempt heads issued to shake out mops and bedclothes. Children with sulky, scrubbed faces trotted off to school. The traffic grew heavier. Trucks rumbled. The face of the clock on the

corner pointed to nine.

A small man with a bent, scholarly back and nearsighted eyes peering from behind thick lenses got off a bus at the corner and strolled leisurely to the library. As he walked he fished in his pocket and brought out a bunch of keys.

CHET, his bright, brown eyes alert from the depths of the cellar, said: "There's our man! As soon as he opens the door, you know what we have to do."

"I still think it's screwy," grumbled the Roman, "but it's your funeral, Chet."

The man whistled tunelessly to himself as he fiddled with the locks. Under his left arm he carried three thick books that were always slipping and had to be adjusted.

At last the door swung cavernously inward. He stepped over the threshold.

"Okay!" rasped Chet.

Two huge dogs hurled out of the darkened cellar, raced across the street. A car narrowly missed them. The driver cursed, jiggled his wheel, and kept on going. They slammed into the open door just as the librarian turned to close it behind him.

The solid weight of Ennius bore him backward with a muffled cry. A great paw rested on his chest; another pressed upon the windpipe, almost strangling the poor devil. Chet whipped inside, thrust his shoulder against the door, slammed it shut.

The librarian, flat on his back, looked up at his assailant with terrified eyes and made choking sounds in his throat.

"Ease up on him," snapped Chet. "But if he yells, choke him off again."

The great paw lifted and the man promptly yelled. The paw descended, and only a burbling sound came

through. The next time it was lifted he got the idea. He lay limp and fear-struck under the grim, overpowering bulk of the St. Bernard, saying nothing and afraid of his life to move.

Chet wasted no time. The morning sun streamed through an overhead window and made the dust motes dance. He raced toward the stack marked *Poetry*. Feverishly he padded along the line, his muzzle lifted, his eyes shifting from title to title.

The librarian seemed to have forgot his predicament. He shifted his head on the floor to follow the strange, yet curiously purposeful peregrinations of the magnificent Irish setter.

First came the ancient classics. Homer, Hesiod, Aristophanes, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Lucan. None of them clicked in Chet's memory. With a snort of disappointment he raced to the next shelves. These were French, German, Italian: Moliere, Racine, Rimbaud, Lamartine; Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Wieland; Dante, Petrarch, Angelo.

Still nothing!

With a snarl Chet flung at the English shelves. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, Shelley, Pope, Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, Browning, Yeats. Whining, nose tilted, he jerked along. Was the whole thing just a kink in his imagination? Was he nuts, as Ennius had seemed to indicate?

Then his eyes fell on a red-backed book. *Tennyson's Complete Poems—Cambridge Edition!*

A LITTLE shock of recognition came to him then. He had just such a volume, in identical edition and binding, in his own library. As a boy he had loved Tennyson. He had thought him the greatest poet of all time. He still had a soft spot for him; though maturity and better judgment

had shifted Tennyson down the scale a bit as a poet. He had memorized, however, in those halcyon days whole passages; like . . .

He barked joyfully, and the St. Bernard turned quickly, and barked back.

"Got your hunch?" The man on the floor was momentarily unguarded, but he took no advantage of it. He was too busy watching this amazing spectacle.

Chet leaped. The book was on the upper shelf. His first leap was short. His second cascaded a Shelley and a Dryden to the floor.

"Hey, don't do that!" yelled the librarian. Ennius swerved on him with a threatening growl and he subsided.

The third jump brought down Milton and the precious Tennyson. Chet sprang upon the book, dumped it over with his paw, turned pages feverishly.

Idylls of the King? No. In Memoriam? No. Maud? No. Locksley Hall? No. Ah! Ulysses, without doubt. Paw holding down the page, his eye raced on. Well-loved lines!

*Push off, and sitting well in order  
smite*

*The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds*

*To sail beyond the sunset, and the  
baths*

*Of all the western stars, until I die.*

Damn! That wasn't it. A low growl of despair burst from his lips. It was no use; it was all a wild-goose chase. His paw mechanically scraped up the pages, turned them. Tithonous, Oenone, *The Lotos-Eaters*.

The name struck sounding bells in his brain. He fell upon the page, snuffing and whining. He read like a thing possessed. Of the Lotos Eaters who forgot home and country, wives and children, who lolled forever in soft shade and ate the forgetful lotos leaves.



*Dear is the memory of our wedded  
lives,  
And dear the last embraces of our  
wives  
And their warm tears; but all hath  
suffer'd change.*

Then, further on, the long lost line:

*But, propt on beds of amaranth and  
moly,*

He flung away from the fallen book with a great, joyous bark.

"I've got it! I've got it!" he shouted.

"Got what?" grumbled Ennius, still keeping a watchful eye on the prone man.

"The name of a flower that should do the trick as well as the *moly*."

"And what may it be?"

"*Amaranth*! It's in Tennyson. He couples them together."

"Zeus take it! How would a poet know?"

Chet nodded his slim, red-brown muzzle vigorously.

"I don't know; but poets have a flair for such things. Maybe it's visions; maybe it's some sixth sense other mortals don't possess; but they write in a sort of divine intoxication."

Ennius was doubtful, but game.

"Okay. So where do we get *amaranth*?"

"I know just the place. Come on!"

"Whoa up! First we gotta get that door open. It's a spring lock."

He stirred the prone man with his paw and growled ominously. The librarian staggered hastily to his feet. He seemed to know what was expected. He opened the door with trembling fingers, and watched the two dogs go out into the street like charging tanks. He closed the door again and fell weakly against it. There was amazement; more, a touch of madness in his eyes.

He wiped his forehead feebly; then went over to the fallen book. He stared down at the poem at which it was opened—*The Lotus-Eaters*; read in it, striving for comprehension.

Then, lovingly, he lifted the sprawled volumes, smoothed out rumped pages, dusted the backs and returned them to their proper places on the shelves. He was mumbling to himself.

"I daren't mention this to a soul! If the trustees should ever hear—" He shook his head dolefully and stumbled to his desk.

BRONX PARK was a place of pitfalls. In the first place, no dogs are permitted; in the second place there are gray-coated guardians with stout sticks to patrol its grounds. Nevertheless the two big dogs managed to worm their way through bowers of budding rhododendron and pine groves toward the Botanical Gardens.

"You're sure this *amaranth* grows here?" husked Ennius.

"Positive! I've seen it many times. There are several species, but the one I've seen along the outside borders is the globe-*amaranth*. They make quite a display of it."

They breasted a grassy hill and crept down to the gardens. The setter's bright eyes literally blazed over the floral display. It was beautiful—masses of eyed forget-me-nots, orange calendulas, giant petunias and flames of marigolds. But these were not what he sought. Then he saw them. A cluster of swinging stalks, surmounted by little pale-blue globes of flowers, almost lost in all that garish magnificence.

With an eager whine he leaped out of covert, everything forgotten at the sight of the herb that possibly meant life and future happiness to him. He did not hear the St. Bernard's sharp, warning bark; nor did he suspect any-

thing until the shadow fell across his path. A gray-uniformed man stood there, stick uplifted.

"Get outa here, you mut!" he yelled. Then his eyes widened. "Cripes! I wonder if that's the setter they're after."

Chet tried to dodge around him, to reach that beckoning bed of flowers. The man brought the bludgeon down upon his nose. With a howl of pain Chet went for him. A murderous roar shook the ground as Ennius charged to the aid of his friend. The man fell back, swinging his club viciously.

"Help! Help!" he shouted.

Other men came running. Ennius hurled himself forward.

"I'll take care of them," he shouted. "Get the amaranth!"

"They're members of that bloody pack," panted the first guard to his fellows. "There's big rewards out. Kill 'em!"

The St. Bernard sprang. Clubs lashed out and caught him vicious whacks on the head and legs. He fell back, snarling. The men came forward, warily. Two of them were between Chet and the precious flowers. He leaped and was driven back. They closed in.

"We can't get 'em," Chet gritted. "Maybe later when—"

A cream-colored roadster purred up the parallel road. A girl was at the wheel, her face pale with long anxiety. She heard the uproar, lifted her head. A group of guards, armed with clubs, were battling two dogs. The dogs were slowly giving ground, and blood streamed down their matted fur.

"Paddy!" she screamed, and ground viciously at the brake. A car behind her swore at all woman drivers and twisted past with baleful glances. But she was already out of her seat, running up the path.

"Stop it! Stop it, you brutes!" she cried.

THE sweating men wavered and held their clubs uplifted. She came among them like a whirlwind.

"What do you mean, hitting those poor dogs?" she flashed at them. "They're mine, and they're worth fortunes. If you've hurt them—"

"Look, lady!" said a gray-haired man heavily. "If them's your dogs you ain't got no right to leave them loose in the Park. And secondly—"

Another car pulled up, attracted by the disturbance. It was a high-ceiled limousine, driven by a huge chauffeur who had large glaring eyes. On the back seat rested a ravishingly beautiful woman, with her gloved hand daintily on the head of a great mastiff.

"Why have you stopped, Phemus?" asked the woman.

"I dunno," said the giant, "'cept I allus liked to watch a dog fight."

Her eyes traveled lazily to the center of commotion. Then all laziness left them. She ripped open the door.

"Quick, Ulysses, come with me," she whispered swiftly, and darted out. The mastiff bounded after, his powerful muscles rippling in the sun.

"Those are *my* dogs," she smiled sweetly on the men. "Thank you very much for finding them. There will be a reward, you know. I'm Miss Kirke."

The gray-haired man began to tremble.

"Miss Kirke! Then—then that's the setter; an'—an' you offered ten thousand bucks."

"Exactly, my good man," she said graciously. "Now if you'll just help me get them both into my car—"

Jessica had been momentarily stunned. Now she darted forward.

"No, you don't," she said bitterly. "Those dogs hate you. There's some—"

thing terribly wrong about this whole business of yours, and I'm going to find out exactly what it is before you dare touch them."

Dea Kirke smiled contemptuously.

"They *are* my dogs, are they not?"

"If you mean that you had them in your kennels, yes; but—"

"There you are, men," Dea turned to the Park employees in triumph. "She admits it."

The gray-haired man scratched his head.

"There don't seem to be no question about it. An' ten thousan' bucks—gee, lady, I'd give ya every dog in town fer that. C'mon, fellers."

Chet had been quietly edging toward the precious bed of amaranth. Ennius growled low.

"Now's your chance, Chet. I'll keep 'em busy."

As the men swung back to them, he sprang. It was beautifully timed. His weight caught the gray-haired man off-balance. He went over with a startled cry. The great dog jumped past him, hit the next man on the shoulder. His knees buckled; he pitched backward with a dull, crunching thud on the cinders. The St. Bernard was a raging maniac; his snapping jaws mowed down the guards before they could even raise their clubs.

Chet leaped the low iron fence, his long, lean jaws wide and panting. Two bounds brought him into the bed of amaranth clusters. A vicious tug, and a plant yanked whole from the soil, roots and all. Chet was taking no chances. He didn't know in what part of the fabled herb its virtue resided—whether in stalk or flower or root. He started to crunch.

Dea's eyes blazed with lightnings.

"It's amaranth," she snarled like a dog. "The magic herb! Who told him—?"

Voice and hand synchronized, while Jessica stood stunned and unknowing.

"Quick, Ulysses, get that brute, Ennius! Phemus, help, hurry!" The whip slid out of its sheath in a blur of speed. "I'll take care of Bailey."

The great mastiff cocked his head, hesitated.

"Get him, Ulysses, I tell you!" she screamed, "and I'll love you forever."

THE mastiff's eyes lit up with an almost human light. He hesitated no longer. With fangs retracted from his lips, he sprang at the St. Bernard. Three men were groaning on the path; the fourth was in full flight.

The two huge dogs met head on. The St. Bernard's muzzle was bloody; a dozen wounds streaked his fur with trickling rivulets; but he roared defiance.

"Come on, you traitor to the human race!" he barked. "I've ached for this opportunity this thousand years and more."

Ulysses winced, said nothing. His jaws lashed out, ripped the other across the shoulder. With a savage snarl the St. Bernard's teeth sank into his forehead. The mastiff twisted and was free; but at the cost of a deep slicing wound. He darted in again.

Head to head they battled, neither giving ground, taking and receiving Homeric wounds that would have felled lesser dogs.

"Help Ulysses, Phemus!" Dea shrieked to the silent, unmoving chauffeur as she rushed toward the munching, chewing setter.

The giant did not stir.

"It ain't *my* fight," he answered with a grin that somehow made pleasant his monstrous countenance. "'T hey're even matched. I allus said—"

Dea's face distorted as she lifted her whip on Chet. The loveliness was

gone; the broad, deep-etched lines of an aged sow clouded the human face.

"You fool!" she screamed at the dog, "I gave you a chance at an immortality of life and love. You've rejected them both for that palefaced creature who'll grow old and haggard in your arms. But I'll not let you get her. I'll send you into the tortured limbo of forgotten things, there to writhe in torment for all eternity." She raised her whip, and it made a shrieking, whistling sound.

Chet tried to duck. His jaws were plastered with leaf and stem and flower. He ground the plant between his teeth with furious haste, gulped it down with great gulps. The amaranth had a bitter taste; aromatic and tart. If only it held the properties it should; if only it acted in time! The first whistling of the whip had streaked his quivering frame with torment; the second, he knew, would cast him into eternal helplessness from which there was no return.

He tried to duck, but already the slim thing descended. It would not miss!

A slender, girlish shape catapulted forward. The whip hand jerked violently back and the snaky leather whistled harmlessly through a patch of gladiolas. The flower-spiked stems cut cleanly through as with a knife. Even as they fell, they blackened and withered as though a burst of flame had seared them.

"Witch!" cried Jessica, wrenching violently. "I know you now. I know what you have done. But witch or not, you'll never live to try it again." The strength of ten men possessed her steeltaut form. The whip dropped to the ground with a thud; the next instant, the two women were fighting furiously, hair disheveled, lips grim and tight, eyes fierce. Back and forth they struggled, swaying, seeking a crucial hold.

Close by, the great dogs parried and slashed and met in earth-jarring head-on collision. Phemus leaned philosophically from the car window, and watched.

"I allus said," he remarked to no one in particular, "that Kirkee would some day get her comeuppance. But I sorta thought it'd take another thousand years or so."

CHET was pouncing on a second plant. He gulped it down; and a third. It took every ounce of willpower he possessed not to spring to the aid of Jessica and Ennius. But every second now was more precious than eternity. Either the amaranth *had* the magic powers Tennyson had guessed through a feat of poetic imagination; or else . . .

Something was happening! His front paws were hurting. His back was sagging. His eyes twitched downward. The fur had disappeared from his paws; they blurred and elongated even as he stared. Fingers formed—lithe, brown familiar fingers. A joyous bark burst from him and shifted in mid-passage to a human exclamation. Fire raced through his veins, quickening, burgeoning.

He was a man!

His rear legs firmed on the ground. He jackknifed upward as the metamorphosis swiftly completed. Fists clenched, he hurled toward the struggling women. Dea, mouth snouting, strangely piggish, twisted free, stopped with sudden gesture for the whip.

Chet snatched it up, out of her very grasp, brandished it. The air crackled with whistling sound. Dea fell back, gasping, wild alarm in every lineament.

"Don't! Don't!" she groveled. "Don't crack it again. Even I, immortal as I am, can't stand that whistling sound."

Jessica cried:

"Let her have it! Let her suffer the way she made others suffer for uncounted centuries. Don't permit her to talk you out of it. She'll trick you somehow."

Chet laughed harshly.

"Her tricks are over," He raised the whip. "Call off Ulysses, or you go to that limbo with which you threatened every one else."

But Ulysses had already pulled away. One ear hung in shreds, his tawny body was streaked with a hundred gashes.

"Don't touch Kinkel!" he cried piteously. "Kill me if you wish; but harm her not."

But Chet heard only moaning whines. Now that he was wholly human, the language of dogs was sealed to his ears.

The St. Bernard staggered toward the trampled amaranth bed. It too was badly cut up. Its bloody jaws champed feebly on the magical plants; it swallowed painfully and with difficulty.

A transformation took place. The dog reared up; its rear legs lengthened and its body tightened. A burly Roman warrior stared around in amazement. He was clad in tarnished armor—breastplate and greaves and a close-fitting helmet on his shaggy locks. His brawny, muscular arms and legs were bare.

"Hail, Chet Bailey!" he husked. His English was slow and labored, as of one who had heard it spoken often but had never yet spoken it himself. "And praise to Jupiter and all the Pantheon! I am Ennius again, just as I was in great Caesar's time. It is a strange feeling."

Chet gripped his hand, watching Dea carefully all the time.

"Welcome, comrade. Somehow, I pictured you like this. Of all dogs, a St. Bernard became you best. Now what shall we do with Circe, the enchantress?"

"Kill her!" Ennius said promptly.

"You can't," Jessica was a trifle pale. Now that the man she loved was human again, all the tigress fighter had ebbed from her and left her feminine. "But she must be placed where she can't do any more harm."

PHEMUS got slowly out of the car. He towered over them all. His saucer-eyes blinking rapidly.

"She's a bad 'un," he warned. "She'll promise anything, and break her promise in a minute. Me, I wanta go back to my little rocky island where I was born, and tend tuh my sheep. Poor little lambs; they must be wore out waitin' all these years."

Circe clasped her lovely hands. Once more she seemed beautiful, ravishing beyond all human grace. Her eyes were piteous.

"Please let me go," she begged; while the dog, Ulysses, stalked stiffly before her in attitude of defense. "I promise you I'll return to the Aegean and never bother mortal again."

Chet shook his head.

"We can't trust you. We'll have to devise a method of keeping you in custody, and harmless."

She recoiled, and her pleading eyes became fiercely triumphant.

"Fools!" she mocked. "I did but make you wait until Father Atlas could come. He heard my call. Hear him, poor mortals, and cower! He'll crush you as though you were wingless insects."

Jessica fled to Chet, clung to him. Ennius staggered back. Even Phemus looked alarmed.

The earth shook and heaved and rolled. Clouds raced up swiftly like thunderheads. Lightnings flashed. A greenhouse toppled with a shiver of crashing glass. Trees rocked and uprooted as though an axe had been laid to their roots. The wind howled.

"Great Heavens!" gasped Jessica. "What's happening?"

Chet was pale, but steady. He grasped the whip firmly in his hand.

"It's Atlas, her father, all right. She called him, and he came."

He came over the woods with earth-crushing tread. His stride leaped apartment houses and splintered intervening trees. His torso was wreathed in smoking, boiling clouds. His face was invisible.

A great foot planted down upon the main conservatory. There was a huge smashing of glass. Another foot planted beside them. Up, up, like a mountain in movement, towered Atlas.

Circe flung her arms upward with a triumphant gesture.

"Slay me these presumptuous mortals," she said fiercely, "and Phemus too. They sought to send me to that limbo beyond the stars with my own magic whip."

Chet gripped the trembling girl tighter to him. Ennius tugged at the sword that hung from his side. He was scared, but dauntless.

The monolithic figure shrank swiftly, coalesced into a little old man with baldish head and clad in a black robe liberally sprinkled with stars and crescent moons. The wisdom of uncounted ages lurked in his wrinkled face.

"Did they now, daughter?" he asked quietly.

"They did," she replied with terrible eagerness. "Crush them into the earth from which they sprang."

Chet thrust Jessica behind him, raised his whip threateningly. Ennius sprang to his side, his short broadsword flashing. Phemus slunk hastily away.

The old man turned to look at them. He seemed but a feeble, helpless thing; yet Chet knew with despair in his heart that no magic whip, no sword, no weapon fashioned by man or gods could

touch the ancient Titan.

Atlas walked slowly toward him. His arm lifted and whip and sword sprang of their own volition from their nerveless fingers.

"Now Jupiter save us!" whispered Ennius.

Chet's head lifted proudly and he held Jessica tightly to him, awaiting the expected impact.

THE little old man's wrinkled hand dropped on his shoulder, patted it kindly.

"You have done very well, my boy. For thousands of years I've waited patiently for someone to humble my daughter properly." His smile was astonishingly impish. "You see," he added in a confidential tone, "I couldn't do it myself. She had too much of her mother in her."

"Father!" screamed Circe. "What is all this nonsense?" She stamped her foot in a rage. "I demand that you kill them for me immediately."

Atlas shook his head.

"No, daughter," he said softly, but with an unmistakable finality about it. "They are free to go, to live out their short mortal lives as they see fit. I admire them for what they have done. You've lorded it entirely too long, Kirke. It was time you were stopped. I was too soft-headed a father to do it; I'm glad they did it for me."

"But—"

"But me no buts," he declared firmly. "You've had your fun, and it must stop. You're coming with me, daughter, back to our own land and our own time. The young man, Bailey, was right. We are anachronisms in this age. We have no place in it. We belong where people will worship us and bring us hecatombs of savory sacrifices." He shook his head again, and a bit of resignation crept into his voice. "We'll follow the Olym-

pians to that other world they found, where people still believe in them." He sighed. "Even if your mother should decide she had enough of Hermes and wants to come back to me. Come, daughter."

"I won't go," she declared furiously. "I won't, I tell you."

He laid his hand gently on her arm. "You must, my dear."

Ulysses growled, and his hackles raised.

"Hello!" Atlas declared in some surprise, "I almost forgot about our old Greek friend. Why don't you also eat of the amaranth and become mortal again?"

The mastiff shook himself and raised his head. In his tawny muzzle something flamed.

"I—love—Circe," he said simply. "I've long forgotten the hunger to be all a man. I am content in my present state, so long as I am near her; so long as she will suffer me."

"You hear that, daughter?" queried Atlas.

Circe bowed her head. Slowly she moved over to the dog, put her hand gently on him.

"He shames me with his devotion." She raised her head again. "I shall go with you, father, wherever you wish—and Ulysses shall go with me."

The old man's eyes twinkled.

"How about you, Phemus?"

"Me?" roared the giant hastily. "I'm goin' back to my sheep. I kinda missed 'em all these years."

Even as Chet and the others stared, Atlas misted. So did Circe and Ulysses. A fog wrapped them round, swirled. When it cleared again, they were gone; and Phemus had driven off furiously in

the car.

"Wheww!" whistled Ennius. "For a time there I thought we were goners."

Chet held Jessica very tight.

"Everything's okay now. We're men again, and we're going to stay that way."

"I liked Atlas," said Jessica. "Too bad he's quitting earth. Mankind needs his kindly wisdom and power."

"Mankind must stand on its own feet now, no matter how rough the road," Chet declared. "The age of the gods is past, and Atlas knew it. But we've got a job ahead of us."

"What is that?"

"You forget all the other poor slaves still under Circe's spell. We've got to release them. Come on, everybody. Pick all the amaranth you can carry, and we'll go searching for them."

Ennius began to grin.

"We're sure goin' to look a funny crowd," he observed. "Me from Caesar's legion, Pedro who was in the Crusades, Sir Sagamore from King Arthur's Court; other guys like that greyhound who marched with Tamurlane, and one big wolfish fellow who claimed he was a Cro-Magnon."

"Human beings haven't changed much in the last ten thousand years," said Chet. "Dressed in trousers and coats, with neckties and socks—and a silk hat—no one will be able to tell the difference between you and Grover Whalen himself. Okay, Jessica, we've got enough amaranth now to change every dog in the city into a man. Let's go."

They got in the cream-colored roadster. Jessica, eyes shining, kicked the starter with a shapely foot and the car leaped forward on its novel quest.

COMING NEXT MONTH!

THE MOST STIRRING FANTASY OF THE YEAR

"SOMEONE TO LEAD THEM"

By JOHN YORK CABOT

# PROBLEM ON MARS



by **DUNCAN FARNSWORTH**

**The fate of millions depended on the answer to a simple question—an answer that would send the Martian rocketing to Earth's rescue**

**CONTEST STORY**  
**\$65.<sup>00</sup> IN PRIZES**

**SEE PAGE 73 FOR RULES**

**Y**OU'RE tired, dear. Why don't you get some rest? You can't go on like this, driving yourself endlessly, ceaselessly, until you crack completely. Please, Nard, won't you take it a little easier?"

Ellen Warren, blond and petite in her severe red-and-gray tunic, looked worriedly down at the big-shouldered, black-haired young man who sat hunched over a chart table in the Federation Laboratories.

Nard Masters, grinning up at her for an instant, shook his head.

"Don't worry about me, honey. I can take it. There's too much work to be done around here. I can't funk out now. I'm needed more than ever."

"Yes, Nard. You're right. The latest reports on the televisors say that the death toll has climbed to 500,000. It's increasing steadily. They're afraid, now, that they won't be able to stop the Plague from crossing the Atlantic. Lord, Nard, if it ever reaches here . . ." Ellen's face paled slightly.

There was earnestness in Ellen Warren's tone as she asked the question that was in the minds of millions.

"Do you really think you can break through, Nard? Do you really think that contact can be established with Mars?"

"The contact *has* been established, Ellen. Those constant static electrical flashes we've been getting on our stratoradios for fifteen years are some sort of a message. I'm convinced of it. If we can only synchronize them into some sort of systematic language terms, we'll be able to make ourselves understood."

Ellen looked at the charts in front of Masters.





"Hold it, Mars. We'll answer your question in a moment . . ."

"Do you think you can do it, Nard?"

"I can do my best, honey," Masters answered slowly. "That's all any of us can do." His voice seemed suddenly tired. "Every so often it looks like I've established a communication basis.\* But my checks on my findings always go haywire." He turned wearily back to his charts. Ellen Warren bent briefly over him, brushing her lips against his aching forehead.

"Keep trying, dear. I know you can do it," she said. Then she left, while Nard Masters went back to feverish scrutiny of the papers before him . . .

NARD MASTERS worked furiously through that night and into the next morning. It was on the following afternoon, however, that Masters, spent, red eyed, and haggard, burst into the conference room of Federation Laboratories and faced an assembly of the fifteen greatest men of science of the day.

"Gentlemen!" Master's voice was almost a croak. "I have it, gentlemen. I have it!"

There was an immediate hubbub of voices, while white-coated gray-bearded scientists crowded around their wide-shouldered young contemporary. And it was an hour after that, that tall, gray, unsmiling Professor Jaro Bennet reached out and took Nard Masters' hand.

"You've done it, boy. You've accomplished what none of the others

has been able to do. We'll start communication attempts within the hour. But for yourself, son, get some rest. Get plenty of it. We'll be needing you to take over the communications boards by tomorrow!"

Nard Masters, infinitely weary, stumbled out of the large, excitedly seething room. In his mind, endlessly, rang the words,

"I did it. I did it. None of the others could. But I did. I've established a common communication between Earth and Mars. I've taken those static flashes and translated them into a language. Now we know the language of Mars. Now we'll be able to talk to them. Now, perhaps, we can get that *planerium* from Mars. And when we do, the plague is stopped, the plague is stopped, the pla—" Nard Masters, reaching his room, fell into a sleep of utter exhaustion, while those words rang in his brain . . .

NARD slept for fifteen hours. And when he woke it was without a realization of where he was, or how he had gotten there. Then, looking around, he realized that he was in his small room in the Federation Laboratories Building. Groggily, he shook his head, sitting up. At once it came to him again that he had triumphed in his battle against time, that he had forged a communication link between Earth and Mars before it was too late. Suddenly, then, he had a natural and burning desire to be up and back at work. He recalled that Professor Bennet had told him he was to be put in charge of the stratoradio communications boards. And so, in less than ten minutes, young Masters had dressed and was striding through the door of the stratoradio room.

Some of the same scientists who had been in the conference room fifteen

\* *The Plague*, a mysterious devastating epidemic, broke out in the European Sector of Earth Federation in the year 2300. Scientists of the day were powerless to stop it without the aid of a chemical substance they knew to be on Mars, called *planerium*. Mars, at the beginning of the plague, was still unreached by Earth, although progress in stratoradio communication between Earth and Mars had reached the point where electrical flashes were detected as coming from that planet.—Ed.

hours ago, were now gathered tensely around the huge white enamellod stratoradio communications board against the far wall. One was unsmiling Professor Jaro Bennet, who now advanced to meet Nard.

"How are we progressing?" was Nard's first question.

"Well enough," Bennet replied. "We're establishing your quick-translator apparatus, which should enable us to speak almost directly."

"What of the plague?" Nard demanded. "Has it been checked at all?"

Bennet shook his head gravely.

"Sweeping like a forest fire, Masters. They don't think they can keep it from the middlewestern plains for more than another thirty hours."

"Middlewestern plains?" Nard's voice was horrified. "You mean *our* middlewestern plains? You mean the plague has crossed, has finally swept over here from Europe?"

Bennet nodded quietly.

"You'd only been sleeping five hours when we got word that the plague had hit New York. There was nothing to be gained by waking you. Thirty thousand have come down with it already. Over three thousand are dead. But that's just a start. We all know it. The havoc that will spread inside of another hundred hours will be sheer maddening hell—unless we can come through."

There was no need for comment. Nard nodded grimly and stepped over to the stratoradio communications board, from which static flashes sparked in orange staccatos of alternate duration.

Nard spoke to Professor Bennet, who had followed him to the board.

"Have you my communication findings?"

Bennet shoved a chart in front of him, and Nard sat down. Briefly he

scanned the chart. On it he had interpreted a series of some six hundred static radio flashes (those they had been getting from Mars) into the terminology of Earth vocabulary. The shading, volume, and duration of each static flash was recorded, and alongside of it the "translation" into Earth language. The colossal job that had taken him fifteen years to record and finally "key" to Earth equivalents.

Then Nard leaned forward and quickly scrutinized a large, oblong, transmitter apparatus which contained a loudspeaker at its top. Old Professor Jaro Bennet explained its purpose briefly to the others.

"It takes the flashes, the static electricity, then 'interprets' them into a voice mechanism—a sort of robot larynx—which speaks directly out of the loudspeaker, saving us the time we'd have to use it to make the translations on paper. It is this electrical device Mr. Masters worked so long to synchronize."

NARD looked up at the communications board, nodding shortly. The orange flashes still sparked across the screen. Then he flicked the button on the oblong transmitter box, and the amplifier began to crackle and hum. To Nard's right was a communications key—similar to the ancient apparatus once used by telegraphers—and using this with skilled speed, Nard began to flash a "message" to Mars.

"H-e-l-l-o M-a-r-s, c-a-n y-o-u g-e-t t-h-i-s?"

The humming in the "translation" mike began to increase, then, metallically, from the "robot larynx" there issued words.

"Still able to hear you. Still able to make myself clear?"

Nard found his heart beating a swift tattoo of excitement. Even though he

knew that the robot larynx was artificial, and that the "voice" of the Martian at the other end of the static flashes was probably vastly different, the illusion of reality was strong.

Nard's fingers manipulated the key.

"Y-e-s, y-o-u a-r-e s-t-i-l-l c-l-e-a-r. W-a-i-t."

Nard reached over and snapped off the loudspeaker button on the robot larynx. Then he turned to Professor Bennet. "You've done some marvelous work, Professor. Building up a communications mike with so little to start on."

"You can credit yourself with that, boy," Bennet replied. "We didn't find it hard, working from your findings." Then the lean lines in his face seemed a little bit graver, a little bit more gaunt. "But I have to tell you now, Nard, that you just talked to the last Martian alive on that planet!"

The words had a bombshell effect on Nard Masters.

"What!"

Professor Bennet nodded.

"We didn't find it out until almost five hours ago. The creature on Mars to whom you were talking is the last living thing on that planet. There has been disaster on Mars, Nard, as far as we can learn, for the past three centuries. Martians have been dying off by the thousands. Some sort of orange dust settling over the planet, killing off its inhabitants, has been the cause. We'd set up our communications with this last living being, had established our patterns\* concerning *planerium* and

made almost every last finding about the planet which would be necessary to our plans, when the Martian told us that he was the last living being on Mars."

"But the *planerium*—" Nard began, whitefaced in horror.

"The *planerium* on Mars is still plentiful. We've established that much. This dust, this stuff that's killed off the Martians, hasn't affected that."

"Thank God," Nard blurted. "But what about this Martian, this last survivor? Why hasn't the dust killed him off?"

"As far as we can learn, the dust works slowly, cutting down the life span of Martians, rather than killing them instantly. Bit by bit, it got to the others, cutting off their allotted time of life. It had finally cut the inhabitants down to one family of six Martians. This Martian was the youngest. The others have died. His time is marked—we can't ascertain how long he has left."

Nard put his head in his hands

"Good Lord, this is horrible! We won't be able to reach him. We'll not make it in time. Why, the ship we'll have to build to get through space will take so long to construct that—"

Professor Bennet cut him off.

"The ship is on the way to Mars, Nard!"

"SHIP, on the way?" Nard was incredulous. "But that's impossible! Federation Laboratories\* have yet to perfect a man-carrying rocket that will reach Mars! Why it will take them—"

\* The existence of *planerium* on Mars had been established through observation and instrument, and a pattern of its probable location points on the planet made by an intricate series of elemento-photo montages produced by long-term varicolored light photographs of the planet's surface as revealed to the spectrographic camera. It was to check with the Martian on the accuracy of these patterns that Bennet communicated them to the Martian for confirmation.—Ed.

\* Federation Laboratories, at this time, although having made vast progress in every field of science, had yet to construct a space ship which could successfully carry a human being through the void and to other planets. They had, however, made small experimental ships by which they'd penetrated the void, but which were too small to carry a human being. These ships, robot controlled, were the same as the one mentioned by Professor Bennet.—Ed.

Bennet shook his head.

"Man-carrying rockets are still impossible, Nard. We still don't dare risk them. But we've sent one of the eight-foot, robot-controlled, experimental rockets. We'll know if it reaches Mars inside of another ten hours."

Nard was still unbelieving.

"But an experimental rocket," he said hoarsely, "won't do us any good. Supposing it does reach Mars—we've still no means of getting it back to Earth with that *planerium*!"

"We can't send anyone in it, if that's what you mean," Bennet answered. "It's too small for that, and we can't perfect a larger rocket in the time we've got. But fate has played into our hands in at least one respect, Nard; the Martian can bring it back with the *planerium*."

"But it couldn't possibly carry a man!" Nard stormed, his frayed nerves getting the best of him.

Bennet put his hand quickly on Nard's shoulder.

"Take it easy, boy. I'm trying to explain this to you."

Nard Masters rubbed his hand across his eyes.

"But the small experimental ship has never been made that can carry a human or, for that matter, a Martian!" he insisted hoarsely. "Someone will have to bring that ship back from Mars. Someone will have to put the *planerium* minerals aboard!"

"Our Martian is precisely two feet tall, Nard, and weighs less than forty pounds. We've learned that the entire race was that size!" Professor Bennet said sharply. "Don't you see what that blessed bit of good luck means to us? The Martian, through our stratoradio directions, can get the *planerium* minerals, several pounds of the stuff, and take the ship back here to Earth!"

Nard Masters opened his mouth in astonishment. "Two feet tall, and less than forty pounds—Professor, you're right! He would be able to fit in the experimental ship. He would be able to bring it back!" There was sudden excitement, and a sweeping flood of relief in his voice.

Professor Bennet smiled wryly.

"So you see, Nard, there is a chance. And it all depends on our experimental ship reaching Mars. We've set the robot controls so that it should land precisely where the Martian is now—thanks to the space navigational data he passed on to us. The Martian is cognizant of the situation, and he's already assembled two pounds of *planerium* minerals, thanks to your excellent communication findings. It all depends on the ship. We've got to wait, got to be patient, and pray that that ship arrives. That's all we can do until we know."

Nard nodded grimly.

"And we might also pray that the plague holds back until we've time to stop it." He shook his head wearily, and sat down again at the chart tables before the communication board.

**P**ROFESSOR Jaro Bennet pointed to the sheaf of papers on the right of the table at which Nard sat.

"There are the papers containing all the data we've collected from the sole surviving Martian as to himself and his racial characteristics. Make interesting reading, and help you pass the hellish wait we'll have."

As Professor Bennet moved away, Nard marveled at the tremendous calm, the steel nerve, the cool calculation of the man. As head of the Federation Laboratories' Department of Science, Professor Bennet was shouldering a task that was staggering to contemplate. He held the fate of Earth in his

hands. Federation's Department of Medicine could stop this plague if it got *planerium*. But it was up to Ben-net and his Department of Science to get that chemical from a planet man had never reached directly before.

Nard shook his head in admiration, then turned his tired eyes to the data on the Martian. Half an hour passed, then an hour, and Nard was reading feverishly—almost forgetting where he was or why—over the assembled data. It was incredible what a wealth of information his communication system had opened up.

From these papers Nard learned what men of science had always suspected, that the Martians were a race at least ten thousands years ahead of Earth in many respects, and thousands of years ahead in others. He learned that, in addition to their size, Martians had other peculiarities that made them anatomically different from Earth humans.

They were blind, for example, in that they had no eyesight as Earthmen knew the term. Their sensory perceptions were by organs impossible to guess at, inasmuch as they possessed nothing resembling eyes.

Sketchy though the inferences were, Nard could see that the chance of the little Martian's bringing the experimental ship back to Earth meant more than bringing *planerium* to stop the plague. It meant that Earth would have the last member of a dying race which was rich in scientific achievement that would add vast stores of knowledge to the world.

If they could get the little Martian to Earth, Nard knew, they would be able to work out an absolutely foolproof method of communication which would enable the scientists of the Federation to tap utterly the rich font of incredible information possessed by this

strange little creature from another world. The thought of what this would mean to the future of Earth was staggering to contemplate.

And Nard read on, occasionally cursing the fact the communication difficulties made certain hinted knowledge only sketchy information. But there was enough there to make his scientific mind alive to the fact that—should they succeed in getting the Martian and the *planerium* back to Earth—he would live to see the birth of a new civilization on Earth.

FIVE hours had passed, when someone tapped Nard Masters on the shoulder. He looked up, startled, to see a uniformed Laboratories messenger holding an envelope out to him. Automatically, Nard reached for the message and tore it open.

The words, electrotyped on the small white sheet of paper, stunned him with a sickening, terrible force.

Nard:

*Ellen has been stricken by the plague. For the love of heaven, boy, stir that Laboratory into action. She hasn't long, unless that drug is obtained to bring her around. I felt that you had to know this. Stick to your guns and do your damndest. We'll let you know if she gets any weaker.*

*Christopher Warren, M.D.*

The white room wheeled giddily for Nard as he crushed the note in his white knuckled fist. Ellen, Ellen Warren—the girl he loved—stricken by the damnably insidious plague! Nard felt his throat choke up dryly, and his eyes burned with a terrible dimness. Automatically, like a man in a trance, he opened his fist and spread out the crumpled note. The words—written by the girl's father—burned again and

again into his brain. *Ellen has been stricken by the plague.*

There was a vague wave of sound around Nard Masters, and he had a fuzzy sense of commotion on all sides of him. But he was stumbling onward through it all, conscious only of the fact that he had to get to Ellen, had to leave the blurred white room with the furious sound.

Then someone had him by the shoulder, shaking him violently, and he heard a voice saying,

"Nard, Nard, come out of it, boy! What's wrong?"

Someone tore the note from his fist, still shaking him by the shoulder, and suddenly the whirling stopped somewhat, and Nard made out the face of Professor Bennet before him.

"Nard, come out of it, son. I just read that note—and I know it's hell on you. But you've got to come out of it!"

Nard brushed Bennet's arm from his shoulder.

"Let me alone," he muttered, "I must get to Ellen, you understand? I must get to Ellen!"

*Slap!*

Nard recoiled from a heavy, open-palmed blow on the face.

*Slap!* he reeled foggily away from a second. And then he was conscious again of Professor Bennet standing before him.

"Get hold of yourself, boy!" The old man was shouting. "You can't go to Ellen. She'll be all right for a little longer. You're needed here, understand? Ellen needs you for what you can do here more than anything else. Do you understand? You can save her only by sticking to your guns!"

The welling of sound grew louder, and Nard's vision cleared slightly.

"The experimental ship has reached the Martian!" Bennet shouted. "That's what this commotion means. Take

your place at the communications board!"

Professor Bennet's words were like a bucket of cold water sloshed across Nard's face. He shook his head, as if coming out of a fog. Then, grimlipped, he looked levelly at Bennet.

"Thanks, Professor. You're right. I was driven a little crazy for a minute."

He turned and moved swiftly to the communications board, sliding into the chair vacated by the scientist who'd been operating the communications key while Bennet was bringing Nard to his senses.

SWIFTLY, Nard's fingers found the key, and simultaneously, his other hand reached out and adjusted the amplifier to louder volume. The Martian's message came out of the robot larynx metallically insistent.

"Your space ship here. Mineral chemicals placed inside. What am I to do next? Dust is thickening. Please hurry."

Someone shoved a diagram in front of Nard. Professor Jaro Bennet stood beside him.

"Those are plans of the experimental rocket ship. You will have to use them to tell him which control to throw to take the ship back to Earth."

Nard increased the frequency modulator on the key, his finger working doubly fast now.

"Enter the rocket ship," he tapped furiously, "and walk to the front of it. You'll find a panel there—a control board—"

The metallic answer stopped Nard cold.

"What is front?" asked the Martian. Nard looked despairingly at Bennet.

"Doesn't he comprehend direction?" he asked.

Bennet shook his head.

"Not as we know direction," he answered. "That was one of the unfortunate gaps in our synchronized communications. But tell him to go to the end of the ship having a board with two knobs prominently at its center. He'll get it that way."

Nard breathed a sigh of relief, his fingers swiftly tapping, "Go to end of rocket having board in center, with buttons on board."

The metallic voice came back a few moments later.

"I am before the board. What shall I do now?"

"Push the button," Nard's finger flew up and down on the key, "to your right." And even as he tapped out the words, Nard realized sickeningly that the Martian would ask—

"What is right?" The metallic voice, coming quickly over the amplifier, finished Nard's horrible certainty.

Nard looked up at Professor Bennet for a suggestion, but to his horror, the Professor's face was strained in sudden fear.

"What's a way to tell him left from right, Professor?" Nard asked desperately. "We can't let him mix those two buttons up. If he pushes the wrong one he'll have an internal rocket combustion that'll blow his ship to hell!"\*

But Professor Bennet was silent, jaw clamped hard as he thought desperately, and, as Nard was beginning to realize, futilely!

"Hold on, we'll tell you left from

---

\* These experimental rockets, set into automatic, robotized action by depression of the starting lever, thereafter took off from the gravity field of a planet and proceeded to the gravitational field of the body pre-determined upon as the destination. If the wrong button were depressed, the rocket, instead of taking off from the planet on which it was, would proceed in the direction of the gravity attraction rather than away from it. Obviously, this would result in the craft digging itself into the soil, and ultimately exploding as its rocket discharges built up and were not expended.—Ed.

right in a moment," Nard flicked urgently down again and again on the key to send the words. "Don't touch those buttons until we do!" he ordered sharply, warningly. "One will bring you here, the other will blow you to fragments!"

Then, wheeling, Nard turned on the other scientists in the room—some fifteen of them—all whitefaced in concentration on what they'd heard.

"All right, gentlemen, can any of you tell me how we can show the Martian his right hand from his left?"

One scientist spoke up.

"Which side is the door on—the door to the ship, I mean?"

Nard looked swiftly down at the diagram of the experimental rocket ship. When he looked up the hope that had been in his eyes for an instant was gone.

"The door is on neither side," he announced. "It is on the top of the ship, directly in the center. Just a hole, really, through which the occupant can let himself down into the rocket. No, I am very much afraid that won't do."

Professor Jaro Bennet spoke out.

"Gentlemen, the question must be answered just as quickly as possible. How can we teach him his right hand from his left? There must be no possible chance for error. That would be fatal.

Nard Masters, thinking of Ellen, the future of Earth, and the fate of millions stricken just as Ellen, wanted to scream out raggedly to break the silence that suddenly gripped that room.

Insistently, anxiously, the metallic voice from the robot larynx rang out in the silence—

"Right, what is right? Tell me . . ."

\* \* \*

*That's the problem, dear readers. Simply tell the Martian which is his right hand! Can you do it?*



# \$65 in cash prizes!

- 1st—\$50.00 CASH      Answer the Martian's Question  
 2nd—\$10.00 CASH      "WHICH IS MY RIGHT HAND?"  
 3rd—\$5.00 CASH      ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

? If you haven't already read "Problem On Mars", read it now. It begins on page 64. It poses a very simple problem, although important to the story. Answer it, and win one of the prizes ?

## THE STORY BEHIND THE CONTEST

EVERYBODY likes to get easy money, and everybody likes contests. That's the major reason for the contest we are presenting to our readers here. But fantasy fans especially like contests, based on their favorite reading pastime. And we, the editors, are always on the lookout for something that will provide both interest and competition, and at the same time, not be so impossibly hard that even our extra-smart readers can't enjoy solving the problem presented.

However, we had no intentions of presenting a contest now. It thrust itself upon us. Here's how it happened. We got a call from author Duncan Farnsworth who was in a dilemma. He'd written a space-communication story, and had come to the climax—and by golly, he found he'd innocently asked himself a question he couldn't answer. It was the simplest question that could have been posed, and yet, it offered so many angles that the problem became one that he felt ought to be shared. That problem was: how to tell a Martian which was his right hand?

Naturally, we don't know what a Martian looks like, although we can bazzard a scientific guess as to his appearance. We can approach him almost certainly by deduction and reasoning and known observation of Mars. But if he has eyes, do they see as ours do? Does he use any of his senses as we do? Do his powers of orientation match ours? *We don't know for sure!*

So, when it comes to a question of which of two ways a lever shall be thrown, one of which is disaster, we can't trust to a fifty-fifty chance of success. We must be sure. Therefore, author Farnsworth wants our readers to tell him how to tell the man from Mars which way to turn a lever—*without any chance of being wrong!* There are ways—many of them. We assure you of that. Can you tell us just one?

You can? Well, then by virtue of the *best* answer you're going to be richer by either \$50.00, \$10.00, or \$5.00. The simple rules follow. Just sit down and write your letter, and send it in. We're waiting with the checkbook before us! And for those of you who give us answers that may be correct, but not in the prize-winning class, we'll have ten honorable mentions, or more, if answers warrant.

### RULES OF CONTEST

- Contest open to all, except employees of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, the Ziff-Davis Publishing Co., and their families.
- Write a letter (on one side of the paper only) giving us in as few words as possible, your solution to the problem posed in the last sentences of the story "Problem on Mars".
- Fill out and return with your letter the coupon below, or a reasonable facsimile, if you do not wish to deface your magazine.
- No entry will be returned.
- Address all entries to Contest Editor, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, 606 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.
- The Editors of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES will be the judges in this contest. Their decision is accepted as final by all contestants.
- All entries must be in the hands of the Contest Editor by August 1, 1961. The winners will be announced in the November issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. In case of ties, letters will be judged as to neatness, conciseness, and clarity of presentation.
- Prize winning letters become the property of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES.
- The Contest Editor regrets that he is unable to entertain correspondence of any kind regarding entries.

### USE THIS ENTRY BLANK (or a reasonable facsimile)

Contest Editor, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES  
 606 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

Please enter the enclosed letter in your story contest "Problem on Mars."

Name .....

Street .....

City..... State.....

# Mr. Murchison's GHOST

"OH!" Mrs. Murchison squealed. "Look, John."

Mr. Murchison, startled, jerked the morning paper from the special place where he had propped it on the breakfast table, and stared across at his wife to see what had come over her.

"What is it, Lucy?" he demanded. "What's wrong?"

"There. In the paper. Oh, you've lost the place. Open it up again, to the want-ad section."

Mr. Murchison, perceiving that while he had been reading the closing prices on the stock exchange, Mrs. Murchison had been reading the other side of the paper; understood that she had seen something to which she wanted to call his attention. It was probably a hat sale, he thought resignedly; or a special bargain of some kind. Just as long as it wasn't another piece of antique furniture, he had no objection.

He opened the paper and started to look for the ad that his wife had seen, but not knowing what it was, he did not know what to look for, and Mrs. Murchison, impatient with his fumbling progress, snatched the paper away from him. She immediately applied her full attention to it, uttering little gurgles and puffs of joy.

"Oh, how wonderful! Oh, this is simply divine! Just what we need."

"What is simply divine?" Mr. Murchison inquired. He was only slightly annoyed. After all it was his paper and his inalienable right to read it at the breakfast table.

His wife seemed not to notice him. The little gurgles of joy continued to emerge from her.

"Oh, this is priceless, simply priceless."

Mr. Murchison felt a slight chill come over him. He had not as yet seen the ad, but after listening to his wife's gurgles, he did not need to see it.

"No," he said.

His wife looked quickly up at him. She had a remarkably beautiful pair of blue eyes and she knew, from long experience, exactly how to use them. She meditated, debating to herself whether to use her eyes or to try some

other feminine weapon first, and seemingly decided to hold the eyes in reserve.

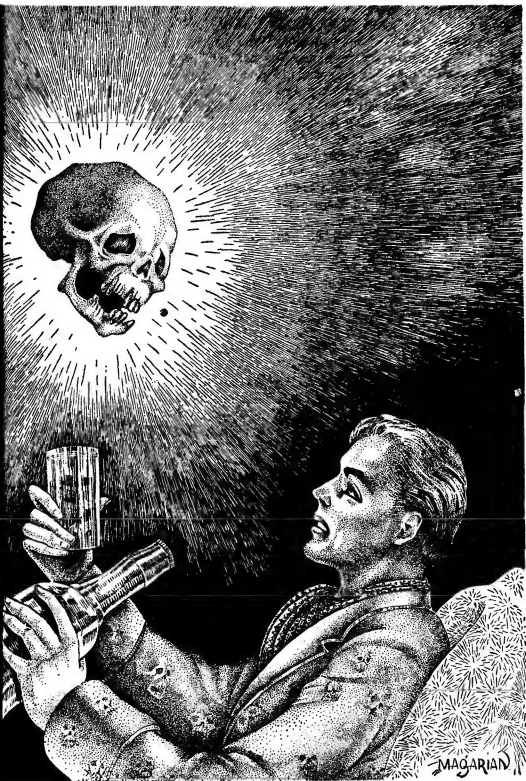
"Why, John! You don't even know what I'm looking at."

"I don't need to know. I want you to understand, here and now—"

He planned to say that under no circumstances was there going to be another stick of antique furniture brought into this house, unless it was over his

**by Robert Moore Williams**

**Mrs. Murchison usually had her way, and in spite of her husband, bought the antique dressing cabinet. But she didn't know that a ghost went with it**



A grinning skull whirled about the room, shrieking and moaning

dead body. The whole place, in his opinion, was cluttered up with such junk now. Every corner had some special knick-knack in it. A man couldn't turn around without stumbling over some damned antique or other.

Mrs. Murchison, having lived with Mr. Murchison for many years, knew what he was going to say before he said it. It would not, as a matter of domestic policy, do to let him forbid her to buy something before he knew what she was going to buy.

"I want you to understand, here and now—" Mr. Murchison said.

"But this is something extra special, John," Mrs. Murchison quickly interrupted. "It's unique, really. Just listen to the ad. 'For Sale, reasonable: genuine Early American Wardrobe. Solid Walnut. A museum piece. Must sell. Private party. Tel. Normal 9-3007'."

Mr. Murchison turned brick red. He appeared to struggle with himself, his cheeks puffing out from the effects of the profanity he was restraining.

"NO!" he said. There was thunder in his voice. He was the lord and master of the household, handing down the law.

"But, John—"

"No!"

"It's solid walnut, John, a genuine Early American piece."

"I don't give a damn if it's solid sycamore and came over on the Mayflower. We are not going to have another piece of junk in this house, and that's final!"

Mrs. Murchison perceived that she had been wise to hold a powerful force in reserve. She brought the eyes into action now, in a frontal attack designed to hit the enemy in the center of his line. Tremulously dropping her gaze, she permitted little puckering lines to run upward from the corners of her mouth. She began to twist her

napkin. A subdued, muffled sob echoed through the breakfast nook. She raised her eyes, with a "How can you treat me in this cruel manner?" look in them. A tear ran glistening down her cheek and splashed into her coffee cup.

"J—John," she whispered.

But Mr. Murchison had hastily gulped the last of his coffee and was on his feet. He knew what those eyes would do to him if he tried to meet their attack. He went out of the breakfast nook on the run, and grabbing his hat from the hall tree (Genuine Colonial), continued out of the house.

"No!" he flung back over his shoulder as he slammed the door behind him.

"Oh, fie!" said Mrs. Murchison. Miraculously, her tears vanished. She nibbled a bite of toast. "Oh, damn!" she said. She was a determined woman, accustomed to having her way. She got resolutely to her feet.

MR. MURCHISON, returning from a hard day at the office, was pleased to find his wife coming down the walk to meet him. Usually she met him in the house, but tonight she was seemingly so anxious to see him that she couldn't wait until he got inside. This was flattering to Mr. Murchison's ego. It made him feel good. Then he saw that his wife was wearing her hat and gloves. He didn't feel quite so good.

"Oh, dear," Mrs. Murchison greeted him. "I simply have to run. It's a dinner meeting. The League for the Preservation of Early American Customs. I simply have to attend. You don't mind having dinner alone, do you?"

The way she said it, Mr. Murchison instantly knew that he was not supposed to mind having dinner alone. In point of fact, he did mind it. He hated

it. It was his theory that if he provided the food, his wife ought to at least be present while he ate it.

"Humph," he said. "Listen, Lucy—"

"The cook has dinner waiting for you," Mrs. Murchison continued. "Everything you like. Steak and French fries. It's all ready. Good-bye, dear. I simply have to hurry." Waving at him, she went down the walk.

"Damn!" her husband said. He went into the house, grumbling to himself, and because he could feel a bad humor coming on, went directly to the sideboard and poured himself a stiff Scotch. It made him feel a little better. Going to the bedroom, he discovered that one Scotch was entirely inadequate.

There, in the bedroom, stood a solid walnut wardrobe, undeniably Early American.

Mr. Murchison stared at this piece of furniture. Heavy rumbling sounds began to issue from his throat.

"By gad!" the sounds said. "She defied me."

Mrs. Murchison's strategy had been simple. After purchasing the wardrobe, she knew it would be unwise to be around when her husband got his first look at it. He would be angry, and in the first flush of anger likely to say things that he would regret later. In order to save him from the embarrassment of apologizing, Mrs. Murchison had wisely decided to absent herself.

"By gad!" said Mr. Murchison again.

"Youh dinnah is served," the cook announced, appearing at that moment.

"Get the hell out of here," he answered.

"But youh dinnah. It's gonna get cold—"

"I'll drink my dinner," Mr. Murchison said.

The cook discreetly went away. She had worked in this household for several years and knew when to talk and when not to. This was one of the times not to.

Mr. Murchison poured himself another drink and drank it straight. Then he mixed himself a highball to use as a chaser.

"By gad!" he said.

AN hour later, he was still saying "By gad!" The Scotch was well down in the bottle and the cook, after having hurriedly put away the things intended for dinner, had taken her departure.

Mr. Murchison felt he had been misused. He had been treated unfairly. He had been defied, and defiance is not the sort of thing to soothe the male ego. If his wife had bought anything else, his protest would have been mild. But this—this *antique!*

"By gad!" he said, choking.

"You said that before," a voice observed.

Mr. Murchison was in the living room, sitting on the sofa, the bottle of Scotch, ice, and pitcher of water on the coffee table in front of him. He was slightly startled to hear a voice speaking to him. Until that moment he had been under the impression that he was alone in the house. Apparently he wasn't. He looked up. A man was standing in the arch between the living and dining rooms.

He was not such a man as Mr. Murchison had ever seen before. Thin and hungry looking, he seemed actually unsubstantial. He was clad in a three-cornered hat, a great coat with a row of shining pearl buttons down the front, and knee length trousers that were skin tight.

"I'll say it again if I want to," Mr.

Murchison answered hotly. "This is my house, by gad! and I'll say by gad in it as often as I please. Who the devil are you?"

"Me? I'm a ghost."

"What kind of nonsense is this?"

Mr. Murchison snapped. "A ghost. Indeed!"

"I am a ghost," the man contended. "Ain'tcha scared?"

Mr. Murchison gave this question some thought. If this was a ghost—which he doubted—he was probably supposed to be scared. But he wasn't scared.

"No," he answered impatiently. "I'm not. Why should I be?"

Apparently the man—if it was a man—found this a puzzler. He scratched his head.

"Folks generally are," he observed, staring doubtfully at Mr. Murchison. "And you oughta be," he decided. "Boo!"

"What the hell are you saying, 'Boo!' for?"

The man looked embarrassed.

"I was trying to scare you," he admitted.

"Scare me by saying, 'Boo!' Don't talk nonsense!"

"I kin do other things," the man observed threateningly. It was obvious that he considered it his sacred duty to scare Mr. Murchison. The latter, perceiving this, was determined that he was not going to be scared.

"Yeah?" he said sarcastically. "Trot 'em out."

"You mean you actually want me—"

"Do your worst," said Mr. Murchison, firmly taking a grip on the bottle of Scotch. "I don't believe you're a ghost and I don't believe you can scare me."

"All right, bud," the man said. "You brought this on yourself."

He vanished.

MR. MURCHISON was at that moment taking a drink straight from the bottle and in consequence he failed to see the man vanish. He looked doubtfully around, failed to see his visitor, muttered, "Where the devil did that fellow go?" and applied himself again to the Scotch. He was momentarily startled by the sound of stealthy footsteps crossing the rug. Following that, a grinning skull came floating into the room. It glowed with a ghastly white light, and approaching Mr. Murchison, gnashed its teeth.

"You got a molar there that needs filling," Mr. Murchison observed, laughing. He felt like a perfect daredevil. Considering the quantity of Scotch he had consumed—and on an empty stomach too—it was astonishing that he could feel at all. Settling himself back on the sofa, he prepared to enjoy the show.

The grinning skull began to turn somersaults. It spun in circles, gyrating on a corkscrew path. Mr. Murchison laughed. His laughter seemed to sting the skull to greater efforts. It began to groan. Mr. Murchison promptly groaned with it. Gnashing its teeth, it backed across the room, then made a screaming dive straight at its audience.

Mr. Murchison waved it away. Unfortunately, in waving, he forgot to take the bottle of Scotch out of his hand. The bottle and the skull collided sharply.

"Ouch!" a voice said from the empty air.

The man appeared again. He was sitting on the floor, rubbing his head, and looking reproachfully at his host.

"Why can't you be a little careful?" he demanded.

"So sorry, old man," Mr. Murchison apologized. "It was an accident. Now sit up and tell me how you managed

that skull business. It was as clever as anything I ever saw on the stage."

"Didn't manage it," the man sullenly answered. "I was it. Don't you believe I'm a ghost now?"

"Frankly, no."

"I am a ghost. I am a ghost. I tell you I am a ghost." The man seemed on the verge of hysterics.

"Tut, tut, old man. You must have been drinking before you came. Try and pull yourself together."

The man began to cry. Mr. Murchison observed the tears with callous indifference. He was conditioned to react to his wife's tears, but the sight of anyone else crying left him utterly cold.

"Do try and pull yourself together," he said.

"I am a ghost," the man wailed, between sobs. "I can prove it too."

"Got some more tricks?" Mr. Murchison asked, with quickened interest. "Can you make a skeleton walk into the room, or the banshee wail, or anything like that?"

"Y—yes, but you wouldn't believe 'em, either," the man said, starting to cry again. "You're the most stubborn, heartless person I ever met."

"OH come now," Mr. Murchison said, moved in spite of himself. "I'm not all of that. If it will make you happy, I'll admit you are a ghost. But you've got to be the ghost of something. What are you the ghost of?"

"I'm the ghost of the man who made that w—wardrobe your wife bought today."

"Oh, come now— Huh? What's that?"

The man—if it was a man—stubbornly repeated his statement.

"I made it," he said, wiping his eyes. "For my sins, I was condemned to haunt it."

Mr. Murchison sat up. For the first time that evening, he looked happy.

"By gad!" he said. "So that's it. In that case, all I can say is you deserved what you got. By gad, this does me good. The man who made that damned thing has to haunt it. There is some justice in this world, after all!"

There was profound satisfaction in his voice.

"I was only a poor apprentice," the ghost wailed. "I didn't know what I was doing. My wife wanted something to put in the bedroom and—"

This touched Mr. Murchison. He perceived that this poor ghost—he now admitted that it was a ghost—was a fellow sufferer in the wiles of domestic thralldom. His wife had wanted something to put in the bedroom. Mr. Murchison knew how much good it did to attempt to resist wives.

"It really wasn't my fault," the ghost blubbered.

"There, there, old man," Mr. Murchison said sympathetically. "I know exactly how it happened. Have a drink." He extended the bottle toward his visitor.

"Huh?" the ghost seemed startled.

"Have a drink."

"You—you really mean it?"

"Of course."

The ghost grabbed the bottle.

"First time anything like this has ever happened to me," he observed. Mr. Murchison, with real interest, watched the contents of the bottle diminish. He wasn't exactly certain where the whiskey was going. It went somewhere, though, and as it went, the ghost seemed to become more solid.

"By gad, you're a fine fellow," the ghost said, taking the bottle from his lips and staring fondly at Mr. Murchison. "Yes sir, you're a prince. Mind if I sit down beside you? It's kind of hard on the floor."

"Not at all," Mr. Murchison said, making room on the sofa. "Tell me about yourself. What's your name. This is the first time I ever had a chance to talk to a ghost."

"Hank," the ghost said. "That's my name. First chance I've had to talk to a mortal in a long time myself. I've tried to, but when I start talkin' the mortal just turns white and goes *swish!*"

Mr. Murchison nodded sympathetically.

"A ghost must lead a lonely life."

Sadly, Hank shook his head.

"You don't know the half of it. Of course, there are a few compensations." He grinned rather lewdly, his host thought.

"Such as?"

"Well," Hank said, "It's worse with some ghosts. They gotta haunt graveyards and places where guys have got themselves knocked off, places where nothing much ever happens. They get lonely as hell. With me, now, it's a little different. I haunt a wardrobe."

MR. MURCHISON tried to concentrate on this difference. From Hank's manner, he gathered that the wardrobe was responsible for things being different, but he couldn't see the connection. He expressed his difficulty.

"Wardrobes," the ghost said, grinning, "are usually important pieces of furniture."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Murchison, goggling. "You mean you—"

Hank nodded emphatically.

"Yep. That's the only thing that's kept me from goin' nuts. I tell you, it's been a sight at times. Why once, I remember a young couple bought my wardrobe—me going along with it, of course. You know," he said, "I got so interested in their quarrels and prob-

lems that I completely forgot my duty and it was months and months before I emitted a single groan, or rattled a bone, or anything. Afraid they'd sell my wardrobe, I was." The thought seemed to agitate him. "Where's that drinking whiskey?"

"Oops! Don't ever grab a bottle out of a man's mouth!" Mr. Murchison said angrily. "Here, you take this one. I'll go get another bottle."

Giving the bottle to the ghost, he went to the dining room and secured another bottle for himself. He was thinking hard. There was one thing about this situation that didn't suit him at all. Not at all.

"Look here," he said. "That damned wardrobe of yours is in my bedroom. Does that mean that you—"

"Yep. It sure does," Hank nodded. "Oh, you needn't worry none about it. You're a good fellow. I won't ever let on that I'm around. You won't hear a groan out of me."

"But you'll be there!"

"Well," Hank shrugged. "It don't matter none. Nobody but me and you will know I'm there."

"But I don't want you to be there!" Mr. Murchison's voice was becoming shrill. "It's not—I won't have it."

"Don't see anything wrong with it," Hank defended. "Anyhow I gotta do it. I'm doomed to haunt that danged wardrobe as long as it lasts."

Mr. Murchison was already pacing the floor. This was terrible. Mrs. Murchison would weep rivers of tears if he ordered her to get rid of the wardrobe. And if he didn't get rid of it, he would have the soul-shaking knowledge that every night a damned ghost was sitting in it, watching him. And probably grinning. It was terrible. It was something no man could stand.

"By gad, I won't have it!" he said suddenly.



"By gad—oops! You've got me saying it now—there ain't anything you can do about it. Don't see any reason why you should take on so much anyhow."

"Well, I see a reason," Mr. Murchison fiercely said.

MR. MURCHISON continued pacing the floor. The more he thought about the situation, the worse it seemed. A damned ghost sitting in the wardrobe grinning at a man all night long. It was more than a man could stand.

Mr. Murchison began to weep.

Hank observed the tears with callous indifference.

"You must have a crying jag," he sneered.

"You haven't an ounce of compassion in your whole body."

"I don't have a body," Hank pointed out. "I'm a ghost, you know."

Mr. Murchison, seeing he was getting nowhere, changed his tactics.

"Look here, as man to man, do you think it's the proper thing to sit there in that wardrobe all night long and snoop?"

"I gotta snoop or I gotta groan," Hank insisted.

"Isn't there anything I can do?" Mr. Murchison pled. "I'm a good fellow. You said so yourself. Isn't there any way I can get rid of you?"

"Nope. Only way to get rid of me is to destroy that wardrobe. That will release me."

"Huh? Will you let me destroy it? Will you let me chop it to kindling and shove it in the furnace?"

"Let you!" the ghost gulped. "Murchie, old man, I'll help you. If you tear that thing up, I'll be free to go to the land where the good ghosts go."

"You really mean it?"

"Mean it! Sir, on the honor of a ghost, that is the very thing I want most."

Mr. Murchison sighed with vast relief. His problem was solved. All he had to do was destroy the wardrobe. After that, everything would be lovely.

"Come on," he said. "I'll get an axe—"

Hank didn't move.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Murchison gasped, suddenly apprehensive. "Have you changed your mind?"

"Nope," said Hank. "I'm more than willing. But I feel it is my duty to warn you."

"Warn me? What about? Is it wrong to chop up a haunted wardrobe?"

"Your wife," the ghost said. "I've seen her. If you chop up that wardrobe, you'll have to reckon with her. I'm willing, Murchie, old pal; but the question remains—is your wife willing? You gotta live with her, you know, and if you destroy that wardrobe without her consent, she'll probably take some living with!"

MR. MURCHISON, in his delight at discovering a way to rid himself of this watching ghost, had completely forgotten his wife. He remembered her now. He knew what would happen if he went ahead without her permission.

"Within fifteen minutes after she gets back and finds the wardrobe gone, she'll have me feeling like the meanest hound dog this side of hell," he groaned. "She'll cry, and everything that I've done wrong in my whole life, she'll remind me of it. Then she'll adopt that 'I am a poor, suffering martyr' pose, and every time I speak to her, she'll just sniffle. Hank, we're licked. I just can't chop up that wardrobe."

He sat down on the sofa and poured himself another drink. But even that didn't improve the outlook. Which ever way he looked, the future was black. If he destroyed the wardrobe, his wife would snatch him baldheaded. If he didn't destroy it, Hank would sit in it every night and grin at him.

The ghost suddenly sat up.

"We ain't licked yet, Murchie, old man!" he shouted. "I've just had an idea."

Swiftly, he explained his idea to Mr. Murchison. The latter blinked, then began to beam.

"Hank, old man," he exclaimed. "You're a genius. That's what you are—a positive genius!" He slapped the ghost fondly on the back. "A genius! That's what you are."

The ghost grinned in the manner of a person deprecating his own admitted abilities.

"It's really nothing," he said modestly. "Nothing at all. Here's how we'll work it."

In great detail, he outlined his plan. Mr. Murchison nodded enthusiastic, if slightly drunken, agreement.

MRS. MURCHISON returned home in mid evening. She was pleased to discover the lights in the house were out. This meant that the second half of her strategy was working out perfectly.

One of her reasons for suddenly remembering the dinner meeting she just had to attend was to avoid what would unquestionably have been a painful scene when her husband discovered the wardrobe.

But she had another and even better reason for going out. If she went out Mr. Murchison would be annoyed and would probably go out too. He would congregate with convivial friends in taverns and roadhouses and become

tipsy. Then, if he gave her hell for buying the wardrobe, she could give him hell for going out and for getting drunk, especially for going out. She was greatly pleased to discover that her plan of putting temptation in the path of her husband was working perfectly.

Entering the house, she went directly to the bedroom, and discovered, to her shocked surprise, that Mr. Murchison was neatly tucked under the covers.

"The rat!" she thought furiously. "He deliberately stayed home, so I wouldn't have anything on him." He had, in her opinion, taken an unfair advantage of her. "The beast!" she thought.

Mr. Murchison stirred and muttered who was there.

"It's only me, dear," Mrs. Murchison quickly replied, hurrying to kiss him. Now that he had stayed at home, she knew her whole array of weapons would have to be brought into play, weapons that included all the wiles women have learned since the time of Eve.

Mr. Murchison was rather groggy. He perceived that he was being kissed. Then he perceived he was not being kissed. His wife was standing beside the bed, stamping her foot.

"You're drunk!" she was saying bitterly. "Every time I let you out of my sight, you sneak off and get drunk. You bum! Have you no respect for your wife at all?"

She had smelled her husband's breath. There was no mistaking that odor. It could only come from the consumption of copious quantities of whiskey.

This discovery pleased her immensely. She didn't know whether her husband had been out or not, but he had certainly been drinking, and she could accuse him of being a drunken bum with perfect safety. She was, in real-

ity, very fond of him. But in a world largely run by men, girls have to do the best they can, a procedure that frequently involves calling their beloved husband a drunken bum.

"Not so," said Mr. Murchison. "Just had two little drinks. No more. Just two. No more. Just two. No—"

"That record is worn out," she snapped. "From the way you smell, you must have drunk a quart at least."

"Not so. Just two. No—" Mr. Murchison went to sleep.

AT first this annoyed his wife. Then she realized that by going to sleep while she was talking, he had given her another advantage over him. Now, when he awakened in the morning, she could accuse him not only of being drunk but of being discourteous. With two such charges against him, he would not dare bring up the matter of the wardrobe. She smiled happily. Husbands only required a little management to make it possible for a girl to live with them.

While she undressed, she mapped her campaign for the next morning. She would be very forgiving about the drunkenness and the discourtesy. Oh, she wouldn't be easy; she would let him know how much in the wrong he really was. Then she would smile bravely through her tears and be forgiving. After that, he wouldn't dare bring up the matter of the wardrobe.

Thus, Mrs. Murchison as she donned her pajamas and got into bed had that feeling of spiritual satisfaction that comes from the achievement of a hard-fought victory.

Somewhere in the house a man groaned.

Mrs. Murchison sat up in bed. She looked suspiciously at her husband but he seemed to be sound asleep. Shaking him only resulted in a louder snore.

From the way he smelled, she knew he would not be easy to awaken.

Mrs. Murchison was a woman of courage and determination, not easily frightened. She decided she had been mistaken about the groan.

The man groaned again.

Mrs. Murchison got out of bed. It would not do to have men groaning around the house, certainly not strange men. She went to investigate. The sound had seemed to come from the living room.

A few minutes later Mr. Murchison found himself violently shaken. He opened one eye. His wife was standing beside the bed. He wondered vaguely what she wanted, then suddenly remembering, decided that Hank had probably gone into action.

"What is it, m'dear?" he muttered. "What is it?"

"One of your drinking comrades has passed out in the living room," Mrs. Murchison said. "Go get him and throw him out."

"H—huh?"

"I said to throw him out," Mrs. Murchison firmly repeated. "I won't have you cluttering up this house with drunken bums!"

WHEN she used that tone, her husband knew to move. He got promptly out of bed and staggered into the living room. Hank was lying on the floor. He looked very solid and real and the groan he emitted sounded very real. Mr. Murchison shook him.

"Look," he whispered, "this isn't going according to schedule at all. She thinks you're nothing but a drunk and she wants me to throw you out. You've got to think up something better than lying on the floor and groaning."

"I'm supposed to be dying," the ghost protested. "This is the act where I imitate a dying man."

"You don't have my wife convinced that you're supposed to be anything but drunk."

"Huh?" the ghost muttered. "Is that so? One of them cool babies, huh? One of them females that ain't scared of nothing or nobody! We'll show her a thing or two. You run back into the bedroom shouting I'm really a ghost. I'll follow behind you and put on an act that'll lift her right out of that bed, or my name ain't Hank. Swing into action, Murchie, old boy." The ghost gave Mr. Murchison a shove. Trembling in every limb, he dashed madly back to the bedroom.

"Lucy!" he shouted. "L—Lucy! That's not a man in there. That's a g—gh—ghost!"

"Indeed," said Mrs. Murchison coldly.

Her husband blinked.

"But I'm telling you it's a g—ghost."

In corroboration of his claim, there came stalking into the bedroom the most eye-rending skeleton that ever rattled a bone in any closet. Every rib showed, every bone gleamed with a ghastly white light that told a tale of foul abominations too horrible to mention. It clanked as it moved. *Clink-clank, clink-clank, clink-clank*, a sound that turned the hearer's heart to water.

Hank, driven by the hope of nearing release from his long life as a ghost if he could frighten Mrs. Murchison into destroying the wardrobe, put on a truly stupendous show. Clinking and clanking, he shoved Mr. Murchison to one side and came marching into the room. Every joint creaking, he bowed to Mrs. Murchison.

"At your service, madam," he said, removing his head from his shoulders and holding it in his hand as he stood smartly at attention.

Even Mr. Murchison, strongly forti-

fied with Scotch as he still was, felt a thrill of horror at the sight. The spectacle, he felt, would drive a normal man to gibbering madness. Certainly it would induce Mrs. Murchison to part with her newly-bought wardrobe.

Mrs. Murchison sat straight up in bed. She pointed a finger straight at her husband.

"I told you to throw that drunken bum out," she said. "Well, go do it and quit putting on this dumb show."

At her tone, even the skeleton faded perceptibly.

MR. MURCHISON sighed. His hopes died. When his wife used that tone, there was nothing to be done.

"It's no use, Hank," he said. "She won't believe you're a ghost. You might just as well climb back into your wardrobe and try to make the best of things."

"What's this?" Mrs. Murchison inquired. "Is he really a ghost?"

"I sure am," Hank answered. "And up until now, I thought I was a good one, but after meeting you, madam, I got my doubts about how good I am."

He went on to explain the situation to her. He expected sympathy.

"Why how perfectly delicious," she said. "A real ghost. All my friends will turn perfectly green with envy. I'll have everybody over and we'll hold seances and you can do parlor tricks and things."

"My god!" the ghost gasped, vanishing precipitately.

"Where did he go?" Mrs. Murchison inquired.

"Back to his wardrobe, I suppose," Mr. Murchison gloomily answered. "That's his hideout."

His voice was thick with gloom. Every hope was lost, every chance gone. For the rest of his life he anticipated having a ghost sitting in the wardrobe

watching every move he made.

He saw his wife's mouth fall open.

"He really stays in there all the time?" she questioned.

"Yeah," Mr. Murchison replied.

"Can he see out?" Mrs. Murchison nervously questioned. "I mean—?"

"Yeah," a voice spoke from the wardrobe. "I can see, and I can hear. Why in my day, I've witnessed plenty! Family battles that would make Hitler's blitzkrieg look like a tea party; and, oh, lots of things even more interesting. It keeps me from my duties, sometime. I'm supposed to groan, you know."

Mrs. Murchison suddenly blushed to the roots of her hair. Her tongue clung to the roof of her mouth. Mr. Murchison observed her with real interest. It was the first time in his experience that she had ever been without words.

She was not long without them.

"Get that thing out of here!" she screamed. "Take it down to the basement and chop it up and throw it into the furnace." She blushed again, a deeper and more furious red. "*John! Did you hear me? Get that freak wardrobe out of this house this instant.*"

MR. MURCHISON fed the last of the splinters into the flame. The wood was old and thoroughly dry. It burned readily. Turning away from the furnace, he found the ghost standing there.

"Well, we put it over on her," the ghost said happily. "It took some doing, I admit, but we did it. Now both of us are rid of that danged wardrobe." He extended a spectral hand.

"So long," he said. "Got to be going now. Good luck to you, Murchie, old boy. If you ever need me for any little thing just put in a call and I'll be there a-clinkin' and a-clankin'."

"Good luck to you, Hank," Mr. Murchison said, shaking the ghost's hand. "'S been a pleasure knowing you, by gad. A real pleasure."

"The pleasure is all mutual," the ghost replied. Whereupon he vanished, and so far as is known, disappeared from mortal sight forever.

At breakfast the next morning, Mrs. Murchison was exceptionally pleasant, never once mentioning to her husband that he had been drinking the night before, or had been discourteous, or had been anything. Nor did she again mention the wardrobe, though Mr. Murchison, observing that she blushed frequently, knew she was thinking about it.

Shortly thereafter, the Murchisons, with singularly little reluctance on the part of Mrs. Murchison, disposed of every stick of antique furniture in their home, re-doing it throughout in furnishings so strictly modern that they could not under any circumstances be suspected of harboring a watchful ghost.

## « MORE ABOUT THE SUN »

OLD SOL has a publicity-shy complex that would rival that of Greta Garbo. He's pretty dependable in lots of other things but the minute we begin to find out something about his beaming majesty, he gets temperamental and kicks a lot of mysterious phenomena into the teeth of our sadly puzzled scientists. Of course everyone is aware now of the sun spots. Nobody knows anything about them except that they are one of Old Sol's periodic pranks to befuddle Earth's observers. But a new mystery in connection

with the sun has arisen. Astronomers have discovered with their new instruments that there is no atmosphere on the sun to hold up its clouds. The mystery is: What supports the sun clouds? These clouds are masses of incandescent gases weighing millions of tons. They may float for days 50,000 to 100,000 miles over the surface of the sun. The nature of the force holding up these clouds is obscure. Astronomers think it might be radiation or that it might be some sort of magnetism.

P. F. Costello.



Hammond fired a shot squarely through the cabinet

# Secret League of Six

by **DON WILCOX**

**Who were the five members of the telepathy league, and why had Frank Hammond, who could really read minds, been invited as the sixth?**

**W**ITH a half day train ride ahead of me I had the good luck to run into Frank Hammond, just returned from Egypt. The war had stopped his work at Cairo temporarily. He was now on the last leg of his return to a mid-western museum, of which he is assistant curator.

"Sit down," said Hammond. "Have a cigar. How's the story-writing business?"

"Picking up," I said, dropping into the seat beside him.

"Picking up, huh?" The squint of his eye showed that he knew what I meant. I had picked up a couple of stories from him a year or so before. My talons were always sharp for a lift.

The rails clicked along under us and we wasted some precious minutes talking about the difficulties of travel in wartime and other commonplace things. But I soon steered him around to Cairo



and held him there with some blunt questions.

"Did you locate the treasure the museum sent you to find?"

"Located it—yes. That's all I managed on this trip. It'll take another year or so of work to excavate it intact. We'll have to wait till after the war."

"What'll it be worth?"

"No way of estimating. Probably millions. There's a wealth of gold filigree that I predict will surpass anything ever unearthed."

"Buried under one of the caliph's tombs, as you thought?"

"Yes."

The clack of rails bridged over a short silence.

"Too bad you had to come away and leave it there," I commented. "You sure it's safe?"

"No one but myself knows where it's located—and I don't talk in my sleep," Hammond laughed. "It's perfectly safe. The entrance to my work tunnel is so well disguised and guarded that wars and weather can come and go. It'll be there waiting."

Hammond gave a deep satisfied puff at his cigar, then turned to me with a gentle chuckle. "If you're after a treasure-digging story, you'll have to wait a few years. Until I get a chance to go back, I'm not even going to *think* about the thing. That way I'll be sure it stays put."

For the next half mile of telegraph poles I turned his words over. The extra boom of his voice on that word "think" reminded me of something about Frank Hammond from his college days—a certain quirk of his; or, as he would say, a hobby.

"How's the mental telepathy?" I asked abruptly. "Ever try any more practical experiments?"

Hammond removed the cigar from

his mouth and gave four or five thoughtful blinks. The corners of his eyes gathered into a curious far-away expression that was part twinkle and part mystery. "Now you *are* on the trail of a story," he said. "Got time to hear it?"

"Always!"

WELL, I needn't remind you, (Hammond began) that I've toyed with theories of thought transfer and extra sensory perception and so on ever since college days. Just as a matter of diversion, you understand. The scientific principles of mental telepathy haven't been brought out into the open yet, so you don't expect most people to go around using it the way they do a flashlight or a radio.

But on the way down the Nile from Alexandria to Cairo I passed some time talking about it with a few passengers who chanced to be on deck. They appeared skeptical of everything I had to say. Apparently, the only person I convinced was myself, though I'll admit there was one listener who followed closely—a one-armed nondescript fellow who might have been part Arab. Name was Lamar.

Anyway, that conversation refreshed my own interest in the subject, and may have had something to do with what followed.

Owing to the secret nature of my mission in Cairo, I could only work a few hours of each night. Daytimes I played tourist in the style of the typical leisurely American traveler. I acted bored. In fact, I was bored, waiting for the daytimes to pass so I could get back to my night work.

One day an ad in a Cairo newspaper caught my eye. It fairly jumped at me. It was only a three-line announcement in the ad section, but it contained the words "mental telepathy."



It read: "Exclusive mental telepathy league. Membership limited to six. Only accomplished need apply. Address K-5."

I answered the ad at once, stating that I was interested to know the nature of the club, entrance requirements, membership fees and activities. I needed a daytime hobby.

In three days I received a mimeographed reply. In jerky English that might have been written by an Arabian translator, the letter explained that "Member Number One" desired to secure a few new members to complete the quorum for "The Secret League of Six," devoted exclusively to mental communion on a plane vastly beyond that of ordinary man's comprehension.

The Secret League of Six, the writer stated, had been established centuries ago by a Muslim prince, "Al-Samir-Reval." It was the wish of this prince that his highly developed arts of mental transfer be perpetuated by the *gifted few* of each generation who were capable of entering this esoteric realm. Would I care to apply for membership? If so, I should come to the address indicated, on any Saturday at break of dawn.

My identity, the letter guaranteed, would be kept a secret. I might come in any disguise I desired, though the form which Prince Al-Samir-Reval had preferred was simply a white robe or sheet worn over the ordinary clothes.

"However, if you are so fortunate as to become a member," the explanation went on, "your identity will be merged in the general sharing of all thoughts on that highest plane of mental and spiritual communication to which our sacred Prince Al-Samir-Reval devoted his life."

The only signature was the mimeographed name: "Member Number One."

THAT letter gave me a tremendous wallop. I reread it six times. I counted the days until Saturday.

Then I caught a breath of caution that cooled me off. There could be some hidden implications. It might be a money-making trap set for bored English and American tourists. But if that was the case, I said to myself, someone would already know what the catch was. I sent my own ad to the paper.

My ad read: "American desires acquaintances with any past or present members or applicants to Exclusive Mental Telepathy League. Address: H-15."

The ad ran for a week and in due time was rewarded with a single answer. After an exchange of letters I found myself looking into the eyes of a very lovely English girl.

As her letter had promised, I found her on a Friday afternoon sitting in the tiffin room of a hotel in the Place Ezbekieh.

"This is a pleasure, Miss Winthrop!" I exclaimed with a trifle more enthusiasm than good manners called for. At once I felt the chill of her English reserve. My efforts to be jovial or casual failed to strike a responsive chord. Her shy eyes constantly shifted to other tables. Perhaps she was afraid of being overheard.

"I was formerly a candidate for membership at the Secret League of Six," she said, and her words had evidently been rehearsed. "What do you wish to know?"

"Well, is the thing on the level?"

"On a very high level. I found myself unable to qualify."

"No catches, then?"

The girl moved the spoon in her tea cup with tight nervous fingers.

"It was a year ago that a call for members appeared in the paper. I attended a meeting. There were several

others present, all of us in disguise. But none of us could pass the tests which member number one . . ."

I ceased to hear her words. I had become completely absorbed in watching the spoon that stirred her tea. *She was drawing letters!*

Yes, she was reciting her words automatically, and at the same time making deliberate motions with the tea spoon that she meant for me to watch.

R . . . E . . . F . . . U . . . L.

She rose abruptly. "I must go now. I wish you luck in your attempt to join the Secret League. Perhaps you have more finesse at mind-reading than I."

She drove away in a taxi.

I took a second look at the various persons who occupied the tiffin room. All of them were strangers to me. None was paying the slightest attention to me, so far as I could tell. But I was sure that someone in that room had forced Miss Winthrop to say exactly what she said.

And she had been clever enough to give me a message, in spite of it.

"R-E-F-U-L."

It didn't take me long to make something of that. I knew I had missed some letters at the start, so I began filling in at the front of the word, trying each letter of the alphabet. Before I got back to my hotel I had it.

"CAREFUL."

That was her command to me!

FROM that moment on you couldn't have kept me away from the Secret League meeting place with a gun—not as long as I had a gun of my own with six ready bullets in it.

An hour before Saturday's dawn the sleepy taxi driver carted me across to Cairo's east side. We passed through the walls of the old Arab quarter and threaded our way along the narrow streets. The early morning light sifted

among the tall old stone houses with their black wrought-iron lattices.

The taxi stopped, the driver took a second look at the address and nodded to me. This was the place.

To my surprise it was not an Arab but an English butler who met me at the door. He gave me an impersonal "Good morning, sir. This way in, sir."

The corridor curved sharply, and I glanced back at the windowed entrance with the comforting thought that I was in good time. The sun had not yet lifted over the tombs of the caliphs on the hills to our east.

"This way, sir," the butler repeated. "The members of the league will assemble in a few minutes, sir."

My second surprise came when the butler led me into an elevator. An elevator was by no means standard equipment in these old Arab houses, tall though they were. But we were not to ascend. As soon as the cage door closed, the walls began to flow upward past us. It was like a drop into a mine. It was a reasonable guess that we descended fifty or sixty feet into the earth.

We stopped, and the elevator door opened.

"You'll find another elevator farther on, sir," said the butler, and he disappeared back of his cage door.

What slick, gleaming, mysteriously curved corridors! And what grotesque murals! The glow from those pictures that lined the walls and ceiling was the only source of light. Old Prince Al-Samir-Reval would have been proud if he could have seen how some modern artist had done him in invisible light.

Under the momentary distraction I lost my way. There were too many curves, too many paths branching off.

"Going down, sir."

I turned sharply at the sound of the voice. It was another butler, dressed like the first one. He was similar in

build, perhaps a little shorter and a trifle more snobbish in manners. He gestured me into his elevator, a cage identical to the first.

Again the walls were flying upward past me for what seemed another fifty or sixty foot descent.

Once again I was confronted by mazes of curved corridors, baffling to my sense of direction.

And for a third time a very English butler, this time a sharp-nosed one that reminded one of an impertinent blue-jay, called me into an elevator for a third descent!

At last, dizzy from rapid elevator rides and tortuous dimly-lighted tunnels, I stood before an ordinary office door marked "SECRET LEAGUE OF SIX."

A mimeographed instruction sheet posted beside the door reminded me that I would enter at my own risk, and that I was privileged to remain in disguise. I drew the white sheet close around my face, opened the door, and went in.

My boy, this was the big moment! I was here at last, and maybe you think I wasn't glad.

And suspicious?

Well, what would you think if you'd just been dunked a hundred and fifty feet down under a city that was only half that much above sea level? Not by one continuous elevator, but *three*! And all those mazes—

It made just one kind of sense—it was a high-powered job of confusing you out of your wits.

Which was pretty near my state when the other league members began to dribble in.

BY this time I had followed the signs and had closed myself in one of the six iron-lung affairs that stood up around the table.

These six upright cylinders were numbered. I chose Number Six, seeing that the door to it was open.

I sat down inside, glanced over the instruction sheet and followed the orders that the ancient Prince "would have us follow if he were here to enjoy the modern equipment for mental communion." I closed the door back of me, inserted my arms into the two rubber tubes (enabling me to rest my fists on the circular table) and adjusted the screened opening to the level of my face.

I gazed across the table at number three and to the other cylinders on either side of me. I saw that it was impossible to tell whether any of the other five seats were occupied. Eyes could not be seen through the masks.

I coughed—and jumped at the sound. It was a low leaden amplified clack, the sort of empty mechanical bleat that an electric vocoder can transform any human voice into.

I glanced back at the instruction sheet posted inside the cylinder.

"By this superb equipment," it read, "all facial and vocal expressions are eliminated. All transmission of ideas must take place on the purely mental level."

A sheeted figure entered the room—hobbled in, I might say. It closed itself in cylinder Number Four. All was silent.

A minute later a tall high-shouldered figure in a long white robe strode across the floor and disappeared within Number Three. There was something marvelous about the anonymity that this equipment gave us. I heard a slightly annoyed grunt from Number Three—or perhaps it was a groan or a sigh. At any rate the tone was exactly the same as my cough of a few moments previous—an unrevealing bleat through the vocoder.

Now there were three of us present. Still there was not a single detail about cylinders Three and Four to distinguish them from One and Two and Five—which I assumed might still be unoccupied.

In time a sheeted figure whose gentle walk reminded me of the first butler I had encountered closed himself within Number Two.

A five minute wait—then Number One entered briskly and marched into the cylinder on my left. Again all was motionless and silent. Then—

"We have gathered in pursuit of the powers we have inherited from the famous Muslim prince, Al-Samir-Reval." The vocoder voice issued from number one. I tried to picture the face that was speaking. I couldn't—not from the inhuman voice. The words were like chunks of dead slate. "I shall call the roll. Number Two."

"Present."

"Three."

"Here."

"Four."

"Yes."

"Five . . . Five." No answer.

"Six."

"Present," I said. All our voices, needless to say, came through on the same identical mechanical pitch. But the sounds told me one thing. There was no one present who did not speak English.

Number One said, "I shall officiate until our membership of six is complete. When that has been achieved and the minds of all members have merged in a telepathic union, my duties as spokesman for Al-Samir-Reval will be done. . . . This morning we have two new candidates. Number Four and Number Six. The official business of this meeting shall be to administer tests for membership. All members shall participate . . . Ahem."

THERE was a long pause for effect. "I'll begin with a very simple telepathic problem," One said. "I am thinking of a letter between A and D. When you have the answer, raise your hand."

Every rubber-encased arm went up, including my own.

"Your answer, Six?"

"The letter is B," I said.

"Correct," said Number One. "I'm thinking of a letter between A and Z."

In a moment all hands were up. Number Four gave the answer as X.

"Wrong," said One. "You're not concentrating."

"It's H," said Number Four—and that was right. I knew it was.

Number One passed questions around among Two, Three and Four, each question becoming more difficult. They came back with the right answers. Then the questions came my way again.

"I'm thinking of a number between eleven and seventy-seven." The rubber-encased arms lifted. "The answer, Six?"

"The number is thirty-nine," I said.

"Correct . . . I'm thinking of a number between one hundred and two thousand. The answer . . . Six?"

I thought swiftly. The answer that came to me was nine hundred and thirty-three; but I said, Nine hundred *ninety-three*."

"Correct," said Number One. "Next we'll go to names . . ."

After a thorough-going drill that might have downed any novice, Number One brought the session to a close with an official assurance that Numbers Four and Six had passed. Our telepathic powers were such that we would soon come to share our minds with theirs. There was the little matter of a fee, however.

A fee, he said, would be a guarantee of our faith in each other. While we

need not ever know each other as ordinary persons know their friends—by face and form and voice and humdrum habits of gaining a livelihood—we should all become brothers in the mental and spiritual realm of our telepathic forerunner, the great Muslim prince.

The fee that would guarantee this faith, he mentioned, could range as high as a thousand American dollars if we wished; certainly nothing less than a hundred dollars would be considered worthy of this great privilege.

The fee, he added, might be slipped through the slit to be found in the end of either of our rubber arms.

After a minute or so of delay, Number Four spilled some bills onto the table to amount to four hundred dollars.

"And you, Number Six?" came Number One's mechanical bleat.

"I must confess," I answered, "that I am not qualified. On one of my answers I made a tongue-slip. If the number I gave was the correct one, then the number I *thought* was right, but failed to say, must have been wrong. For this mistake I should be disqualified."

"No," said One. "You forget our telepathic powers. Each of us realized that you failed to say the number you knew was right. Mentally, each of us made the adjustment you were entitled to on that answer. You are completely qualified to pay your fee and become one of us."

**I** FORCED one hundred and forty American dollars through the rubber casing on my right arm, and my first meeting with the Secret League was declared adjourned. We were instructed to leave in the order we had come, so that the blend of our minds would not confuse us as to our separate physical identities.

Before the next week's meeting, I did considerable pondering over this matter of telepathy. As I've mentioned, it isn't something that a person ordinarily bothers his head about. I'd never taken lessons in it, like you may have on the piano. But some natural musicians, you know, make some discoveries about piano playing without taking lessons—and that's what had happened to me in this telepathy business.

As never before, I was on my toes about other people's thoughts.

Some of my guesses were doubtless off the target. I wasn't certain whether my strong hunch that Miss Winthrop hoped I would talk with her again was a rash tangent or the real McCoy. Anyway I tried to get a message to her asking her to phone or write me, since I did not have her address; but I got no answer, and assumed that the Arab messenger must have got tired of trying all the doors in the English quarter and gone to sleep.

The one important contact I made during the week, of interest to my telepathy hobby, was Lamar, the nondescript one-armed Arab I had talked with coming up the Nile.

It was rather strange, my running across him. I was crossing from the park in the Place Ezbekieh when I noticed someone walking along the street.

"The first butler," I said to myself. Then, considering, "Or was it Number Two at the Secret League?"

I had almost overtaken him when he ducked into a tiffin shop, his eyes flashing at me as he moved into the shadows.

"It was the third butler!" I said to myself, "the one with the impertinent nose."

Then, to make sure I was right, I waited on the bench outside the shop. I squandered an hour or more. Surely in another minute or two he would

emerge. Finally I went in, sauntered down the line of tables.

"Looking for someone?" said a voice, and I saw it was the one-armed nondescript. He invited me to sit down and have tea. By this time I saw that the butler was not in the shop. How or when he had left was really none of my concern, and I turned my attention to the one-armed Arab. We drank tea and talked.

"You still believe that thoughts can be transmitted directly from one brain to another?" he asked, smiling elegantly. "How far do your mental powers go? So far as to tell me my line of business?"

"You sell linen goods and English imported clothing," I said.

He patted his hands together delightedly. "You are very clever."

"Not at all," I said. "You gave me your card as we came up the Nile."

"But you could not tell me—" he stopped and a quick anxious look crossed his brown face. The question he checked was instantly in my mind, by telepathy, and before I had thought through its implication I offered an answer.

"I can tell you," I said, "that you are carrying a great deal of money. In American dollars alone you have five hundred and forty dollars."

A sallow paleness came into his cheeks, but he managed a little bow. "Perhaps you are right, perhaps you are wrong. I must be going."

He rose abruptly, and I was momentarily at a loss to know whether I had embarrassed him.

"There's no harm in carrying large sums as long as you have deep pockets," I added pleasantly.

His glance flicked toward his clothing and back at me, and he turned and walked out without another word. My eyes followed him and I concluded that

I had added insult to injury; for plainly he was wearing clothes much too large for him—an incongruous state for one supposed to be in the clothing business. In fact, his clothes were large enough to have fitted the missing butler. I wondered . . .

AT the second meeting of the Secret League the interchange of thoughts branched out into ideas more complicated than simple numbers and names. I came away elated. The answers had come easy for me.

I flew back into my work considerably toned up. There's nothing like a hobby. Especially when you feel as though it's releasing some natural talent that you knew all along you had, but never got to use properly.

By this time my work, too, was definitely on the right track. I had struck the treasure, and had only to work out plans for its excavation before I would be ready to report back to my headquarters in America.

The third and fourth meetings of the League crystallized several of my observations that had been only half formed at first. I began to know the three different butlers as you might know three St. Bernards from the same litter—minute differences in their strutting and barking, in spite of general similarities.

I came to know the mazes of corridors that led off from the elevator shafts, though I concealed my knowledge from the butlers.

I confirmed my original observation that the elevator rides did not cause any changes in the pressure of my eardrums.

But these matters were slight compared to the leaps I had made in the practice of telepathy. There the ideas were jumping like popcorn.

I came to the fifth meeting realizing

that anything could happen.

And I was fully set to see that one thing did happen: It was high time that I had a turn at putting some questions to the others. They knew well enough that I could reach to their minds for answers. But I had never had a square proof that they had a similar reach into mine.

There were pencils and blank papers on the table when I took my place for the fifth meeting. I closed myself in my cylinder, adjusted my arms in the rubber casings, peered through the screen to watch the others arrive—one at a time, as always.

There were still only the five of us, ostensibly. That is to say, no form had ever been seen to enter the fifth of the six places, and no leaden voice had ever sounded from its mouthpiece.

"The time has come," Number One announced, "that we should delve more deeply into the treasured secrets of our hearts. For each to know the finest and best that the other knows will weld us into the spiritual one-ness that Prince Al-Samir-Reval foresaw for us."

**BY** turns Numbers One, Two, and Three spent some minutes in silent concentration upon their treasured mysteries. The others of us were asked to relate what we had received. It suddenly became very complicated.

Number Two turned on me and asked me to recite the count of the stones in each layer of one of the pyramids, which he had just now released from his mind. I fell down badly, and Number One shot a cutting remark at me. "Perhaps we're not so near a spiritual unity as I thought. Number Six, can you *write* the numbers called for?"

I complied, and Number One allowed the meeting to proceed.

That slight incident aroused my fighting blood.

Then like a blast of cannon-fire through a cloud came a spoken proposal from Number Three.

"I wish to share with you one of the most stupendous pieces of knowledge that man ever possessed. I know the location of a vast treasure, one of the richest ever buried."

The metallic clank of his words echoed wildly in my ears. I was instantly on my guard.

"I may be the only person in the world," he continued, "who knows under which of the many so-called caliphs' tombs the treasure lies, and how it may be found. Think with me, my brothers, while I impart this information to you."

The dead silence held for a few seconds, then the rubber arms began to come up, indicating that the message had gone across.

I raised my hand with the others. But in truth I had received no message from Three. His knowledge of a treasure was all bluff!

"Number Six fumbled on the last question," said Number One. "He may have done the same on this."

"Let him write his answers," said Number Three. "I'll see whether he caught all the details."

"Write," said Number One.

I swung the pencil into action, then hesitated. "I'll write if the rest of you will do the same."

Number One made a slight reach, but evidently thought better of it. "The rest of us have checked our results mentally," he said. "Write."

I wrote: "King Tut's Tomb. Dig till you find it." I passed the paper across the table.

"This is an outrage!" Number Three clacked. He recited my words without picking up the paper. "I can't understand this levity! I specifically referred to the tombs of the caliphs!"

"Levity constitutes a breach of faith!" Number One snapped crustily. "Al-Samir-Reval's rule was death to any member who would trifle with his brother's trust."

"I don't wish to be hasty in judgment," said Number Three, "If Six didn't know the rule give him another chance to comply. Let him write the full answer within the next three minutes."

"Be quick about it, then!" Number One barked. "We allow you three minutes—"

"I'll take them," I cut in, "to ask *you* some questions!" In that tense moment everything came clear to me. I plunged. "Listen! As a paid member, I demand the right to test *you* as you've tested me!" I slipped my gun down toward the fingers of my right hand.

"Don't be childish!"

"Answer up with your hands," I said, "as quick as you catch my message. Here it is: I'm thinking of the most fascinating discovery I've made since I got quick at this game of reading other people's minds. What's my discovery? Hands, please!"

No hands responded.

"I'll give you a hint. It's a rare secret gift that has come down—to *you*—through the hands of a few rare magicians and sorcerers—"

No hands.

"A gift to be envied by actors—"

Still no hands. I hurled my challenge like thunderbolts.

"What? You don't know? Or do you? If you do, you're trying to keep it a secret from me. But you can't! I got it from you by mental telepathy . . . All right, I'll give it back to you straight! My discovery is this: *Someone here has the rare gift of being able to change his features and his bodily form!*"

THERE was a dead silence, but I didn't let it last. I was full of words that wouldn't hold back.

"Generations will come and go without ever guessing that blackest of man's secrets. But wait until the day that mental telepathy sweeps out the dark corners. You rare Proteans won't have such a sweet advantage. Your Jekyll-and-Hyde acts will come right square under telepathy's searchlight! There'll be a ventilation of all the skulduggery your breed gets away with!"

"Your three minutes are up!" Number One snarled. "You'll die!"

"I'll take three more!" I clanked. "What am I thinking, Number One?"

His clipped words came back fast. "You're thinking you've violated all the rules sacred to the prince. You've come back at a brother's test question with a ridiculous answer. You're thinking that if you don't come through with a quick answer on that treasure you'll never see daylight!"

I laughed, and the laughter clacked out in the same even key as his threat.

"Your telepathy was never at lower ebb, Number One! Take a straight look at my thoughts and you'll see that killing me wouldn't gain a thing for a certain butler-turned-Arab named *Lamar!*"

I jabbed my gun through the slit in my rubber arm.

"Wait, Hammond! Hold it!" The monotone outcry spilled from the mouthpieces of Numbers One, Two, Three and Four simultaneously. A single voice from everywhere!

*Bang!* I shot through Number One. I turned my gun on Number Two.

And because my mental telepathy told me exactly what I was doing, I pulled the trigger all of four times. One bullet punctured *each of the first four* upright cylinders.

Then I turned the gun toward Num-



ber Five. On the instant the vocoder's mechanical monotone was broken by the scream of a girl.

"Don't! Don't kill him!" Her cries came from under the circular table.

I held my gun on Number Five. "Come out, Lamar. I've got ammunition enough to blow you through the wall."

"You're talking big, Hammond!" said the figure that emerged from Number Five. It was neither a butler nor a one-armed Arab; or rather, it was something of both, a balance of extremes achieved in the transition stage. "Don't forget you're pretty well trapped down here a hundred and fifty feet below the ground."

"Don't make me laugh," I snorted. "Your canvas walls that rolled past your stationary elevators weren't quite as realistic as your contortions . . . Tell that girl to stop screaming!"

**I** JERKED out of my rubber arms, swung through the door of Number Six, and flashed my gun at the disappearing figure of Lamar. He slid through the trapdoor in the floor of Number Five.

In that split second I let him get away. The girl, crawling out from under the table, saw me turn my gun aside.

"Oh, thanks," she moaned, clutching at my knees helplessly. "Thanks for letting him live!"

"I hadn't any other intention," I muttered. "If his mental telepathy had been any good, he'd have known that . . . Say, you're Miss Winthrop, aren't you! I've been having some strong premonitions that you were mixed up in this." In fact, I had known, by telepathy, that she was eavesdropping, driven to it by her fears.

I helped her to her feet. She was as frightened as any child you ever saw,

pleading for the life of the man who was her uncle. He was all she had to depend upon, she cried, and if all the crimes he'd got away with came down on his head it would kill him—and her too. She just couldn't bear to live if she lost him.

The way she was carrying on, darned if I didn't think she was putting on an act—but at once my mental telepathy told me otherwise. And it also told me that her Uncle Lamar wasn't going to pop out of a trapdoor in the floor to make trouble with firearms. He had his own plan . . .

I made the rounds of the cylinders and saw the trapdoor in the floor of each, and saw how easy it had been for Lamar to make one entrance after another in the guise of different persons, slipping out each time by under-floor passages. I examined the equipment in Number Five, where Lamar had stationed himself, after all his entrances to shift his voice back and forth and carry on conversations with himself from four different points. I saw the mechanical devices by which he operated the rubber arms of One, Two, Three and Four. All in all, it was the neatest mechanical set-up for conducting a one-man secret society you ever saw.

**F**RANK HAMMOND glanced out the train car window at the passing telegraph poles and chuckled softly to himself. "Yes," he said, "the changeable old cuss had gotten by with a lot of hoaxes, all kinds of them, by a clever use of his high-pressure equipment. But this mental telepathy business was his Waterloo. He didn't have it, and it took him for a ride."

"What happened to him?" I asked. "You mentioned a plan."

"Yes—a quick suicide. It was hard to explain to the authorities, but I gave

them my telepathic insight. The fellow just couldn't face defeat. He saw all his glittering hoax was punctured—the biggest hope of his life, to get next to that colossal treasure, was blasted right out of his hands. He couldn't take it. Miss Winthrop and I heard the gunfire from the passageway under the floor, and when we reached him he was dead . . . There was one bit of comfort for her. In dying, he had reverted to the form of one of the butlers. It was in that guise that she had loved him most."

Frank Hammond rose from his seat. He looked down at me and seemed to read the countless questions that welled up in my mind.

"Think it over, my friend," he said. "And don't forget what I said about the new insights that telepathy is bound to bring us. So far as I know, there's no other way that this diabolical art

of Lamar's would ever have been apprehended—though I'll admit he was in a tight spot in the tiffin room that time I waited for him as a butler, and he shifted into the one-armed Arab to elude me—in spite of his clothes."

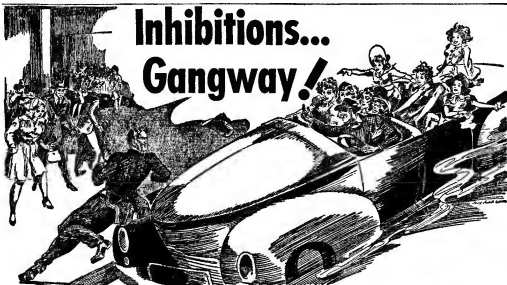
"I can't understand why such a girl as this Miss Winthrop should have strung along with him," I said.

"Poor kid," said Hammond. "She was a victim of circumstances. She had grown up under his domination. It seems to have become a part of her make-up. It may take years for her to outgrow the effects of his bullying."

"She probably never will," I commented.

"On the contrary," said Hammond. "She shows progress every day. By the way, she's back in the next car wondering what's become of me. Would you like to go back and meet her?"

THE END



Did you ever wish you could do just as you pleased? Ever want to "kick over the traces" and let yourself go; and to blaze with silly taboos? Well, then by all means don't miss a grand opportunity to do it! Read MR. MUDDLE DOES AS HE PLEASES and follow his amazing uninhibited double into the most hilarious adventures in science fiction. Written by two master writers in collaboration—William P. McGivern and David Wright O'Brien. Also featured in the big August issue is EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS with the further adventures of the famous John Carter.

**AMAZING  
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# The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Concluded from page 6)

THE origin of Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," one of the greatest fantasy-fiction yarns of all time, was just as bizarre and unusual as the actual story. It seems that the celebrated novelist was troubled with vivid dreams, and one night during an unusually turbulent session, his wife awakened him. Stevenson jotted down the facts of that particular dream and around it he built one of his finest stories.

The dream supplied him with the characters, situations, bits of dialogue, and directed the course of the story. It is interesting to speculate on what might have resulted if his wife had not awakened him.

SOME of you non-romantic males might be aroused somewhat by casting your eye at the creation of woman, as described in the original Sanskrit.

Twasktrie, the Vulcan of Hindu mythology, did the job and here's a play-by-play of the method used:

"He took the lightness of the leaf and the glance of the fawn; the gaiety of the sun's rays and the fears of the mists; the inconstancy of the wind and timidity of the hare; the vanity of the peacock and softness of the down on the throat of the swallow. He added the harshness of the diamond, the sweet flavor of honey, the cruelty of the tiger, the warmth of fire, and the chill of snow. He added the chatter of the jay and the cooing of the turtle dove. He melted all this and formed a woman. Then he made a present of her to man."

Now, does that make you appreciate the little woman a bit more?

OUR odd-facter, Arthur T. Harris, sends us some facts that we present for what they are worth. Says he: Recent tests reveal that a car which smashes head-on into a telephone pole at a speed of 25 m.p.h. might just as well have been pushed off a two-story building. Ramming a stone wall at 50 m.p.h. has the net effect of an eight-story drop, except that the damage is more spectacular.

All this is just Mr. Oddfacter's sly way of pointing out that your editor some time ago did exactly that last with a new Buick.

Well, can we claim we have dropped eight stories and still live, Harris old boy?

WHEN the U. S. Army Corps gets around to it, they'll probably name the new Douglas B-19 bomber *Gargantua the Second*. This ter-

ror of the skies, even more formidable than the famous Martian battleships of John Carter and Edgar Rice Burroughs, has a range of some 7,500 miles and carries 18 tons of bombs. Used simply as a troop transport, it can ferry 125 fully equipped men.

Powered by four Wright-Duplex Cyclone engines in two rows, each of 2,000 h.p., the B-19 requires a crew of ten. With 8,500 square feet of metal surface, a fuel capacity of 11,000 gallons, and a maximum gross weight of 82 tons, this air giant could take off from New York, unload its bombs in Europe, and fly back across the Atlantic to its home base.

Its only drawback is its huge size: 212 feet in wing spread, a 132-foot fuselage, and a span of 61 feet for the horizontal stabilizer. Top speed is only 210 m.p.h., which isn't half fast enough, considering the big target it makes, to elude enemy pursuit ships.

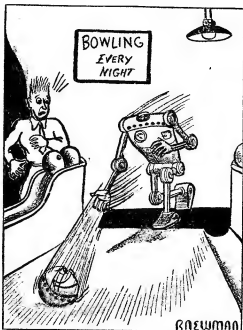
But all the same, it's a fantasy story come true, and how!

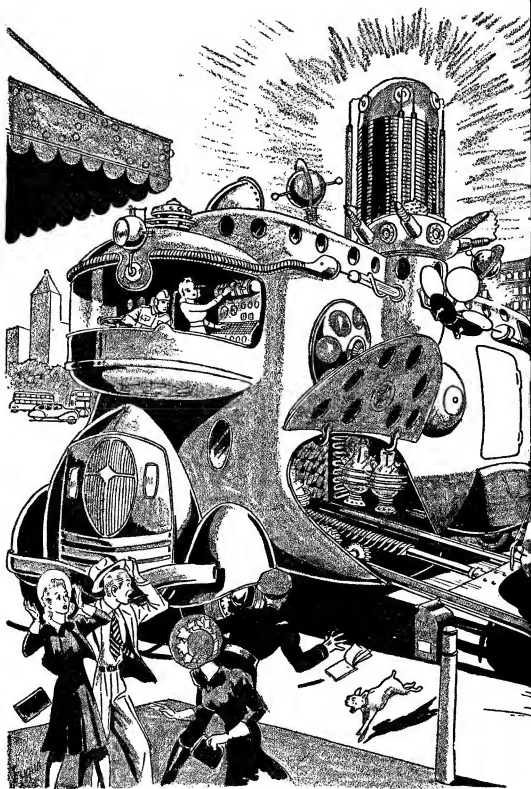
U-235, the isotope of uranium, fabulous as a future source of atomic power, can now be produced, it is thought, by wholly new methods. Isotopes, which are different forms of the same element, can be separated by an ultracentrifuge, a spinning mechanism whose main principle is the same as a cream separator.

Estimates are that a relatively low rotary speed of 66,000 revolutions per minute will be required to do the trick, insofar as divorcing U-235 from uranium is concerned. Research along this line is being conducted by Dr. J. W. Beams, of the University of Virginia.

Which is all for this issue.

Rap





There was a startled cry, then the scoop picked up the auto, driver and all

# Ebbtide Jones' **ATOM** **CONSTRUCTOR**

by **MILES SHELTON**



**T**RIXIE GREEN JONES flung off her silver fox furs as she stormed into her husband's office. Anger burned through her pretty rouged cheeks.

"Ebbtide! Your office boy's a dope!"

"Which one?" Ebbtide grunted without looking up. He was stuffing papers in a brief case.

"Hercules—the big boy. What's he walking out for this time of day?"

"Hercules?" Ebbtide blinked his small eyes and smeared his dusty fingers thoughtfully over his long, boney face. "You must mean Pokey, the big dumb one. He probably went out for a coke."

"Dumb is right. Walked right by me and didn't even speak. And me, the wife of the richest, most enterprising junk dealer in America—"

"Sit down, Trixie. You're jumping round like a hooked fish. I got busi-

**It was a marvelous invention. It turned an auto into a thin metal disc that could be filed away. But Trixie Jones had a very poor filing system!**

ness to talk with you. You've got to run things while I'm gone. I'm taking off right away for Siberia and China."

"The first thing I'll do is fire Polecat, if he can't learn some manners—"

"It's Pokey, not Polecat—"

"He's just Polecat to me," Trixie snapped. Her sharp eyes caught on the dust marks on her husband's cheeks. She leaned over the streamlined desk from her tiptoes and curried his face with a handkerchief. "Maybe he doesn't know I'm the wife of the famous Ebbtide Jones that saved the day for the Zandonian King and got paid off with a trunkful of jewels. Maybe he thinks I'm just little Trixie Green, the waitress at the Chaw-Chaw Cafe—a *nobody*—"

"Shush! Snail soup!" Ebbtide muttered. "Pokey's just dumb. He's as good a wastebasket emptier as I ever had on the payrolls—"

"He could at least *speak* to me—"

"No! I'm telling you he's *dumb*. He ain't spoke a word in his life—"

"Oh, you mean *dumb*?" Trixie's eyebrows lifted to see new light. "Well, why didn't he say so?"

"You and Pokey oughta get along just fine together," Ebbtide said, tickling her under the chin. "Listen, little funny face, I may be gone for three or four weeks this time, that's why I want you to run a ground behind this desk and don't let no high tides sweep you off till I get back."

"Gee!" Trixie seated herself behind the big desk and looked admiringly at the compartments of an open drawer. The tabs were lettered in Ebb's familiar scrawl: "BEACH COMBER GOODS, washed up," "City Junk Deals," "SECOND HAND DEALERS, Trixie's Dad and Others," "Clippings on America's JUNK KING," "Hauling and Misc." Trixie drew a deep breath. "Gee!"

Ebbtide discreetly closed the drawer. "You won't have to bother nothing. All you got to do is sit here and be a fig-head, like a king."

"Like a queen," Trixie corrected pressing her hands on the desk-top majestically and smiling to an assemblage of imaginary subjects.

"The clerks will handle the regular run of business, but if some big shot comes in and demands to see the manager, well, you'll be here to stall him off."

"Stall him off? Sure," said Trixie confidently. "When I used to be a waitress at the Chaw-Chaw Cafe, I had all kinds of practice at stalling guys off—"

"Here's the idea," said Ebbtide. "If some sharper comes in from South America and says for a thousand dollars he'll sell you the options on a chain of wrecking companies along the coast of Patagonia, all you gotta say is that you're deferring action at present. Defer action. That's all you gotta do. Get it?"

"Mr. So-and-So," said Trixie, rising and speaking to an imaginary customer, "I prefer action at present!"

"Defer, not *prefer*!" Ebbtide shrieked, reaching as if to throttle her. But Trixie, the little monkey, was only teasing him. "All right, you," he gruffed, as she kept laughing at him, "just tell them nothing doing today. Got that? Or shall I write it down?"

THEN the bell rang and a moment later Stan Kendrick, the scientist, greeted the two of them like long lost cousins.

"Ebbtide and Mrs. Ebbtide! Fancy finding you two lovebirds still together after ten full weeks of married life!"

"I was just leaving her," said Ebbtide with a grin. He creased his new twenty-dollar hat and dropped it on the back of his head. "I'm off on a round-

the-world business trip. I'm busy as an upstream salmon these days."

"You're an important man, Ebbtide," the scientist beamed. He couldn't help contrasting the ungainly Ebbtide of earlier days with this well dressed, if still somewhat awkward, business man. Before he and Ebbtide had taken that daring spaceship journey and gotten mixed up with the rich Zandonian king and come back to the Earth with a bonanza of jewels, Ebbtide had been simply a long-legged beach comber.

Not that the vast wealth had displaced Ebbtide's beach comber instincts. He was still beach comber to the core—shrewd, quick to drive a bargain, sensitive to the values hidden within goods that most people might call waste. He could smell a good wreck—an earthquake-shattered palace or a hurricane-ridden city—halfway around the world.

But the new Ebbtide, as his old friend Stan Kendrick saw at a glance, had clothes and capital. He had an airplane. And he had a brighter light in his eye that showed he was no longer gambling in thousand dollar ventures, but in millions. Three skyscrapers had been torn down to make room for the Junk King's new headquarters just off Wall Street.

"I'm important, all right," Ebbtide grinned. "At least the crooks think so. Every high-powered racketeer in the country has been casting bait my way. But all my money don't make me smart enough to be a scientist, like you, and it was your dizzy figures and theories and things that got me all this."

"I've got a new one for you today," said Kendrick with a proud smile and a wink at Trixie. "It's a little trinket that will save you millions. Take a look out the window."

They looked down into the street at the huge odd-shaped vehicle. It oc-

cupied the parking space of two or three cars, and its sleek red body with silvery gadgets and crystal-roofed tail blazed in the sunshine.

"Trinket!" gasped Trixie.

"Jumpin' catfish!" Ebbtide blinked. "Looks like a cross between a hungry whale and an army tank. Look at that big steel mouth in front. What does she eat? Truckloads of concrete?"

"Concrete, coal, books, automobiles, diamonds—anything."

"No kiddin'?"

"No kidding. It's an atom constrictor."

"You don't say." Ebbtide gazed. He nudged Trixie and mumbled. "It's an atom constrictor."

"I heard him," said Trixie, her nose pressed against the window pane. "I'll take my chances with a plain old-fashioned boa."

"I'm not so sure," Kendrick laughed. "A boa-constrictor, they say, likes to coil around you and crush you to death. This little trinket simply knocks the third dimension out of you."

"The hell you say," said Ebbtide. "Before I catch my plane I've got to see this thing work. And dammit, quit callin' it a trinket."

## CHAPTER II

### Cream Puff Wanted

**P**OKEY, the "dumb" office boy with the broad shoulders and the dish-water blue eyes, had gone out ostensibly to get a coke. However, he ambled past three soda fountains without so much as looking in. He strode down the second alley he came to, descended a passage to a basement door. He entered, crossed through an apparently deserted storeroom, followed through two obscure doors, and presently was admitted into a hidden room.

The room was flooded with deep orange light. It contained several luxurious overstuffed chairs and one overstuffed man. The man puffed at his pipe, blew a complacent cloud of smoke at Pokey, and closed the door back of him.

Then the man chuckled. "I've been reading the papers. This criminal they call the Cream Puff is the biggest sensation in years."

"They've got seventeen murders against him now," said Pokey, dropping into a chair and lighting a cigaret.

"And twenty-five robberies." The overstuffed man chuckled deep down in his throat. He was not a big man; on the contrary, he was less than average height. It was the general pudginess of his figure, the bags that surrounded his eyes, and the loppiness of his cheeks that gave him the overstuffed appearance.

"I think the Cream Puff is a damn fool," said Pokey, "the way he's playing for publicity. I read that his last three corpses were found with cream puffs lying on their chests."

"His signature."

"What if he gets caught—just once? Every cream puff job will fly back in his face. They say he's wanted dead or alive."

"He won't get caught," the overstuffed man rumbled in a low, satisfied voice. "He's too smooth. That's why the papers named him Cream Puff in the first place."

"You sure of that?" said Pokey.

"What are you driving at?"

Pokey strolled over to the scales casually, stepped on, watched the arrow swing up to the two-hundred-thirty mark. He strolled back, flicked the ashes of his cigaret into a gold tray. "Maybe the newspapers named him Cream Puff because he's over-inflated with his own conceit."

"Don't make me laugh."

"There ain't many big shots that'll go so far as to turn in news stories on their murders in advance."

"That's where Cream Puff has got it over all of them. They've never seen him—*none* of them—reporters or coppers or even the run-of-the-mill gangsters. He's too smooth for them. But they're all scared silly at the mention of him, and when he shoots a story in to the papers announcing that Bill Jones was murdered at ten o'clock and ten thousand was stolen—*smash!*—it happens, just like that! Never a slip-up, my boy!"

"I hope not," Pokey muttered, pacing uneasily.

"**A**ND now, my boy," said the overstuffed man, laying down his pipe and pouring a drink, "when do you think the Cream Puff will do his next job?"

"April tenth, seven in the evening."

"Exactly seven?"

"Exactly. The time lock on Kiptoller's biggest vault takes a half hour's breather every ten days, regular as a clock. Old Kiptoller himself is the only one that will be there. Ebbside'll be out of town."

"Where?" asked the overstuffed man.

"Off on a junk bender," said the dumb office boy. "Off for three or four weeks. China, Siberia, and points west. I think he's probably heard of the waste lands of Siberia or maybe the Chinese junks, and figures to see if they've got any salvage value. Anyway he was in such a dither to get off that I got his signature on a couple of blank letters."

"What are we waiting for?" said the overstuffed man, putting down his glass. "Take a letter."

Pokey sat at the typewriter and clattered the keys. Letter number one instructed J. P. Kiptoller, jeweler and



manager of Ebbtide Jones' stock of precious gems, that Ebbtide Jones was sending an item back from Egypt to be placed in storage with the gems. It was a priceless mummy. It would arrive in time for the April tenth opening of the safe. The trusted porter of the building would wheel it in to Kiptoller's door, and would remove the shipping box afterward. "Handle with greatest care. You have always carried out my instructions to the letter. It is doubly important that you do so in handling this valued collector's item—Ebbtide Jones."

The second letter was to the trusted porter of the building, instructing him carefully. The valued box would arrive at the freight door at six-thirty on the evening of April tenth. It must be conveyed at once to the door of Mr. Kiptoller's shop on the main floor. Within an hour the shipping box would be waiting outside Mr. Kiptoller's door and should be conveyed to the platform outside of the freight door at once, owing to the possibility of unpleasant odors.

"Do you follow?" asked the over-stuffed man, when Pokey had finished.

"I see murder number eighteen coming up," Pokey muttered, starting to get up from the typewriter.

"Take a news story," said the over-stuffed man.

Pokey's fingers returned to the keys.

"DATE the story April tenth, seven-twenty p.m. When the time comes, phone it in *on the dot* over your wire tapper telephone. Give 'em the news while it's fresh, but not one minute before. Now, take a news story:

"Cream Puff Scores Again. Prominent Jeweler Murdered, Safe Robbed of millions in Precious Gems.

"J. P. Kiptoller is dead and the famed Zandonian gems which he kept

for Ebbtide Jones are gone. It's all in the day's work for that genius of criminals, the Cream Puff. The body of Kiptoller, well-known jeweler and importer of precious gems, was found floating in a wooden box in the fountain at Chestnut Square. On the victim's chest lay a fresh cream puff, the signature adopted by the brazen murderer.

"The body was identified at once by police and by countless persons who flocked to the fountain. Other police officers forced an entrance at the Kiptoller Jewelry Shop to find the large vault open and emptied of unestimated millions of dollars' worth of gems. The gems were the famous Zandonian collection owned by Ebbtide Jones, the Junk King, known to have been deposited for safe-keeping in Kiptoller's vault.

"Preliminary investigations, according to information mysteriously supplied by an unidentified source purporting to be the Cream Puff himself, will prove that Kiptoller was murdered with a poison needle. A questioning of the porter at Kiptoller's building will reveal that Ebbtide Jones, traveling in the Orient, was thought to be sending Kiptoller a mummy for safe-keeping. But the letters from Ebbtide Jones, it will eventually be discovered, were only a part of the Cream Puff's set-up for another perfect murder and robbery.

"The mummy case, it will be apparent, contained no mummy when it was delivered to Kiptoller's door. It contained the Cream Puff, very much alive. Later it contained Mr. Kiptoller, very much dead.

"But what happened to the Cream Puff? Did he calmly fill a suitcase with jewels and blandly walk down the street? Did he take a seat beside you on the street car and chat with you about the weather?

"Well-a-well, it looks as if the police are in for many a sleepless night. But

they might as well go home and sleep it off, for they have never yet had a glimpse of this slippery eel. He leaves no clues. He even bakes his own cream puffs."

The typewriter rattled to a final stop. Pokey folded the paper and buried it deep in his pocket.

"I'd better trot back to the office or I'll be missed," he said.

"I'd better grab a plane for Miami," the overstuffed man mumbled, "and get in on the last of the social season. Be back by the tenth."

### CHAPTER III

#### The Atom Constrictor

"IT'S as simple as driving a car," Kendrick declared. He mounted the steps to the driver's seat. Ebbtide and Trixie followed. Kendrick touched the starter, shifted the gear lever, pressed the accelerator. The big machine rolled along gently. People stared from the streets as if they were wondering what kind of new trackless locomotive this was. Or was it simply a freakish fire truck?

"This will do for a demonstration," said Kendrick, driving up to the curb and stopping near a trash can. "Watch closely."

Ebbtide and Trixie watched open-mouthed. Kendrick placed his hand on the white golf-ball-knobbed lever, moved it slightly. At the same time a huge steel claw reached out from the open steel mouth that yawned beneath the vehicle's headlights. The jaws which comprised the front of the machine opened wider, and the steel claw scooped in the trash can.

"How'd you like to have a set of false teeth that would reach out and pull in your food like that?" Kendrick asked.

"Ebb would go on a steady diet of

trash cans," said Trixie, when Ebbtide failed to answer.

"Wait a minute!" Ebbtide exclaimed. "What goes on here? That *cat*—"

"Follow me and I'll show you." Kendrick snapped a switch and the gentle rumble of the inclosed powerhouse fell silent. Then he led the way around the narrow catwalk high over the wheels that looped, balcony-style, around the tail of the big red vehicle. Trixie and Ebbtide followed, clutching the steel railing. They peered through the crystal walls at the several huge crystal barrels packed horizontally within. The rear of the vehicle was a vast honeycomb of cylindrical walls.

"Any one of those horizontal barrels can be removed at the touch of a switch," said Kendrick. "That's my proudest achievement in this whole complicated invention. It makes the machine practicable for use, Ebbtide."

The Junk King scratched his head. "In the first place, I never did understand this business about the fourth dimension. In the second place, that *cat*—"

"This has nothing to do with the fourth dimension," Kendrick said. "Three dimensions are trouble enough. Look. Why don't you have your big warehouses in the center of the city?"

"Because there ain't room enough."

"Exactly. That third dimension's always giving you grief; if you stop to figure it out scientifically you'll find that all this awful congestion in the city can be chalked up to too much third dimension. All right, this little trinket—this atom constrictor—can collapse anything that will go into its mouth, into two dimensions. Ebbtide, we've got something!"

EBBTIDE twisted his eyebrows and turned to his wife. "Trixie, we've got something."

"I heard him," said Trixie. "What I want to know is, what happened to that trash can?"

"There it is," said Kendrick. He pointed to a round silvery disc visible in one end of a crystal barrel. "It's been *two-dimensionalized*. Strictly speaking, it still has a microscopic third dimension, for all of its atoms are still there. But it's no thicker than a sheet of paper. What we call substance, you realize, is in reality largely space."

"What happened to the cat that chased the mouse into the trash can just as we drove up?"

"Cat?" said Kendrick. "Where was said cat when last seen?"

"In the trash can."

Kendrick jerked a thumb toward the silver disc in the barrel. "It got two-dimensionalized too."

Kendrick led the way back to the driver's seat. He was anxious to demonstrate that the practical use of this creation extended beyond the flattening of trash cans. Thus far, Ebbtide's comments hadn't revealed a satisfactory grasp of the idea.

"So it presses things flat," Ebbtide was saying as he and Trixie resumed their places in the driver's cab. "Now if I was in the pants pressing business . . . If I was running a cider mill—*Look out!*"

At a touch from Kendrick's hands the big machine rolled forward, opened its jaws wide, and scooped in a shiny black automobile. There was a slight grind in the hum of machine, like a buzz-saw going through a knothole.

"Great jumpin' oysters!" Ebbtide yelled. "That was my car!"

"Nobody in it, I hope," Kendrick grinned.

"There was two thousand dollars in it, cold cash!" Trixie gasped.

"Come back and we'll take a look at it," Kendrick snapped off the switch.

Ebbtide and Trixie rushed back along the catwalk, clutching the railing tensely. Kendrick followed. All eyes beheld the new item in the crystal storage plant—another silvery disc in the same barrel. Disc number two looked precisely like disc number one.

"There's your car," said Kendrick, grinning broadly.

"Gee!" Trixie gasped.

"Well, nibble my bait!" Ebbtide groaned. "Maybe we've got something. But I'm damned if I can figure what's the good of a two dimension car."

"Maybe you've never run up a storage bill," Kendrick laughed. "Now comes the exciting part. I'll show you how simple it is to take these items out of storage."

BY this time a crowd of thirty or more bystanders had gathered on the sidewalk to follow these mysterious goings-on with amazed eyes. Kendrick motioned them back from the rear end of the machine to allow space for the emerging barrel. He drew a lever slowly, the huge crystal barrel containing the two silvery discs eased down on rollers by way of an inclined track.

"The temperature of each barrel is near absolute zero," Kendrick commented. "The tiniest particles of matter, ordinarily in violent motion, are pretty well behaved at that temperature. The atom constrictor has collapsed every dimension to a certain extent. Obviously these discs of uniform size are more convenient to handle than irregular-shaped plates would be."

"How can I tell which one of those discs is my car?" Ebbtide grumbled.

"If you decide to use this invention, either for storage or for economical transportation, one of the first things you'll need to do is establish some system of classifying your items so you'll know what's what. Use any system

you like. A numerical system would be the simplest; but if you prefer you can write the name of each item on the automatic handles."

Kendrick pointed to the two handles, one attached to the top of each disc, each equipped with a tab for classification, each equipped with an electric plug.

Ebbtide noted mentally that there was a capacity in each crystal barrel for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of discs. He noted that the discs were five or six times the diameter of a phonograph record and wondered if they had any value as scrap metal.

Or were they metal? One of them, he tried with difficulty to convince himself, was part trash and part cat; the other, part upholstery and part gasoline and oil. No, thought Ebbtide, this couldn't be. Friend Kendrick must have had a bad dream when he put this powerhouse together. And that car had cost two thousand—

"Watch closely," said Kendrick. With miniature ice tongs he caught one of the two handles that appeared to project through the cylindrical crystal wall. At the same time his foot pressed a pedal at the base of the barrel. The silvery disc slid out.

HE repeated the processes. The second disc emerged. It rolled a few feet, wobbled, clanged like a Chinese gong until it came to rest flat on the pavement.

"Lots of molecules in that baby," said Kendrick. "Heavy ones, too." He dragged out some extension cords and plugged in each disc.

The crowd gaped. Trixie weaved uneasily on her feet, caught Ebbtide's arm for support. Ebbtide suddenly began to perspire. *Both the discs were swelling.*

"It won't be long now, folks," Ken-

drick commented. "A little electrical heat from this powerhouse—" he nodded toward the atom constrictor—"is like compressed air to a flat tire. Our compressed molecules will soon expand back to normal."

A crowd of no less than one hundred and fifty people saw it happen. Each disc swelled up like a doughnut, spread out in all directions, began to resume its former shape.

Within a minute the traffic of that street was tied up tighter than a log jam. Two policemen stormed through clogged cars and spectators, roaring "Break it up! Break it up!" By the time they got to the center of the jam, they saw—and fell silent. Their eyes bulged out even with the bills of their caps.

One mass of material slowly grew into the likeness of a car—larger—larger—blacker—shinier! It suddenly stopped. A signal bell rang. Kendrick jerked off the electric handle that was clamped on the front bumper.

The other mass swelled into a full-sized trash can. Its action stopped at the sound of the signal bell. Kendrick removed the electric handle.

As he did so, a rattle of paper attracted his attention. Out of the can leaped a yellow cat with a mouse in his teeth. The cat raced through the crowd and was gone.

## CHAPTER IV

### Trixie Makes Alphabet Stew

FOR several days after Ebbtide had taken off for his round-the-world junk junket, Trixie obediently reported to his office and obediently did nothing.

Each day Trixie grew more restive. Sitting in a big shiny office gazing at the reflection of her pretty little elbows on Ebbtide's desktop was not Trixie

Green Jones' idea of being useful or important. She wanted to be useful and important.

She wanted to do something that would delight and surprise her husband, such as sorting his papers or fixing him up with a new system of bookkeeping. Or opening a new branch office at Coney Island, or—or—*ah!*

The big wonderful idea descended swiftly upon Trixie. A telephone call started the ball rolling. Someone who had witnessed the Kendrick Atom Constrictor demonstration on the street 'phoned in to inquire whether he could have a small airplane delivered by two-dimensional transfer. He wanted to surprise his family, and the novelty of having the plane unfold before his family's eyes appealed to him. The call was transferred from the regular order department to Ebttide's private office—and then and there the big idea struck Trixie with a jolt.

"I think it can be arranged," Trixie spoke into the 'phone breathlessly, "if you don't mind waiting a day or two . . . I'll call you . . ."

That was it! She would create a new department of business for Ebttide—a two-dimensional transfer and storage department. By the time he got back the new business would already be rolling in. Trixie could hardly sleep nights for thinking of it.

"I saw the Kendrick Atom Constrictor on the street the other day," another man called in. "My son has a birthday on the ninth. Could you deliver a bicycle in two dimensions?"

The news of that demonstration must have spread like wildfire. Each day brought more inquiries. Potential customers wanted all sorts of things stored or delivered, from trunks and diamonds to steel cranes. A baldish bright-eyed old sugar-daddy wanted to store away five sets of furs for future reference.

"Gee!" Trixie gasped every time she put down the telephone. "Stan Kendrick was right! We've got something!"

Kendrick had left at the same time as Ebttide; Kendrick would not be back. But the scientist had laid a manual of instructions in the seat of the driver's cab after finishing his demonstrations. From that hour the atom constrictor had been parked in the basement freight room and Trixie had carried the key.

In her enthusiasm Trixie even forgot her grudge toward Pokey, the dumb office boy. She ceased to notice how many times a day he went out for cokes.

ON April the eighth the new Jones Two - Dimensional Storage and Transfer Department began business. On that memorable Thursday the atom constrictor, manned by a faithful employee under the supervising eye of Trixie, made its first commercial pickups.

On Friday, April ninth, the new service made its first deliveries.

On Saturday, April tenth, the new service hovered on the verge of a nervous breakdown. There had been a mix-up. The alphabetical filing system Trixie had so proudly worked out for sorting and storing the uniform silver discs had somehow slipped a cog.

At nine o'clock that Saturday morning the complaints began to roll in. By noon the telephones were screaming and irate customers were storming the offices.

At one o'clock Saturday noon most of the employees closed up shop and went home. Complaint department 'phones were snapped off for the weekend and all calls shot straight to Trixie's office.

By ten minutes after one Trixie

Green Jones was in such hot water that if it had been a tub bath the soap would have sizzled.

By fifteen after one Pokey emptied the last wastebasket and marched out the front door. His official duties were done for the week. The real business was ready to begin. Pokey had already prepared his tapped-in telephone, using one of the lines of the building that he assumed was never switched over to the head office. It was a minor error. Pokey underestimated the staff annoyance at this sudden deluge of complaint calls. Every 'phone in the building had been switched to Ebbtide's private office.

For most of an hour Trixie battled the telephone calls.

"Yes, Mrs. Liptrot, I realize that there has been a mix-up . . . Your luggage will be delivered yet this afternoon, I'm sure . . . But I've already sent the trucks out to make the exchange . . .

"Your piano is on the way, Mr. Jandrene. The transportation men won't go off duty until the exchanges have been made . . . Yes, they'll pick up the blocks of quartz they left . . . Simply a mix-up of P's and Q's. We're very sorry . . .

"Of course if you insist on suing for damage . . ."

*"Great spoutin' whales, what's the hurricane all about?"*

Trixie dropped the 'phone. "Ebbtide!"

"It's me all right!" Ebbtide grinned as he strode around the desk. Trixie sprang into his arms.

"Ebbtide! I didn't expect you for a week!"

"I didn't expect myself. But business in China—well, don't ever let nobody fool you, Chinese junks haven't got nothing to do with junk. They're two different breeds, like cheese and

mosquitoes. What's all the 'phone jangling about?"

"Ebbtide!" Trixie was suddenly sobbing. "I was going to have such a big surprise for you—but—but—"

"What-the-hell-kind of surprise?"

"Two-dimensional—" Trixie fairly boo-hoed against Ebbtide's topcoat. "Everything was going fine till I got the letters mixed."

Ebbtide's face lost all symptoms of its usual grin and took on the look of a pickle freshly dipped in salt-water brine.

"You mean you've been messin' with that boa constrictor that Kendrick gave us?"

In answer Trixie brushed her pretty nose up and down against Ebbtide's topcoat pocket.

"Well, I'll be shoved out to sea on a turtle's back!" he muttered. He grabbed up a ringing telephone and barked into it. "What's that? . . . Supposed to deliver an *airplane*? . . . Big surprise for the father-in-law, huh? . . . Inheritance at stake—yes . . . Well? . . . Oh, the disc turned out to be a bicycle, did it? . . . Umm . . . Family sore, huh?"

"I got the A's and the B's mixed," Trixie sniffled.

"Go ahead and put in your claims," Ebbtide snapped at the 'phone. "We'll treat our customers right . . . Yes!"

ANOTHER call came in. It was the father who had planned to give his son a *bicycle* for a birthday gift. While Trixie sobbed something about B's and C's, the father on the telephone unfolded his heart-rending sob story. He had plugged in the silver disc, it had swelled up into a *crane*—a full grown steel crane big enough to lift a freight car. The damned thing had pushed up through the living room ceiling and broken out one of the walls before they

could turn the juice off.

Damages? Off course, Ebbtide's firm would stand good for the damages.

*Brrrrng!* Another call! Another mix-up! The foolish-hearted old fellow's embarrassment was so hot that Ebbtide fairly blushed to hear him talk. It was *ermine* he had promised *this* girl; that *fox* fur was meant for another one. He was already in a jealous tangle, and after what happened last night he was just plain sunk.

"Take it easy," said Ebbtide. "Go pick out a nice cool iceberg. You need a vacation—*Damages?* All right, you old snapping turtle, do your worst!"

*Brrrrng! Brrrrng! Brrrrng! Brrrrp!* Ebbtide threw his topcoat over the telephone bell and let it buzz on unnoticed. He turned to Trixie with a fierce light in his eye and demanded to know what else she had done during his absence. As if it wasn't enough to fly around the world on a wild goose chase, he had come back to find his business jammed full of monkey wrenches.

"Did Kiptoller know you started all this?" he demanded.

"No," Trixie sniffed. "It was my own idea."

"You might have at least consulted Kiptoller about it."

"Kip hasn't been in but twice, and I was too busy to talk with him. I told him where you'd gone. Gave him your Siberian address. That was all."

"When was that?"

"Last week. He said he'd get in touch with you as soon as you got back."

"I'd better go over and see him right away," Ebbtide grumbled. "The kind of whirlpool you've got us in is gonna call for a neat handful of Zandonian jewels quick, or we're sunk. It's lucky this is the day the safe opens. I'll catch him there at seven."

"You don't have to be so sore at me,

Ebbtide," said Trixie, getting into a mood for a good fight. He laughed bitterly. For a moment he wasn't sure whether to reason with her and show her what a detriment to prosperity she was, or simply spank her and get it out of his system. He decided to reason first and finish up with the spanking, thereby leaving the atmosphere completely cleared.

But he never got around to the spanking. The verbal fight lasted later than he expected, and it took an unpleasant turn. Trixie threatened him. She said if he was going to be ugly she'd leave him till he got over it.

Where would she go, he'd like to know.

"I'll go in the atom constrictor, that's where."

"Haw. You'd be a pretty thing, flattened out into a disc."

"All right, smarty, you can laugh, but I mean it. I might as well be flattened into a disc. I'm nothing but a flat tire to you anyhow. You can just file me under the T's and I'll stay there till you're sorry. If you ever want me again you know where to find me."

"Come back here!" Ebbtide roared. "Where you think you're going?"

"To the atom constrictor," Trixie snapped. She walked out the door, down the hall, her heels clicking angrily.

EBBTIDE looked after her, uncertain whether to follow. He knew that she had one unfilled order: to pick up an item on Chestnut street for storage; and he knew she was determined, in defiance to him, to complete that order. Even if she had to operate the atom constrictor herself. She would do it, all right. Nothing would stop her when she was in this mood. Woe unto anyone who got in her way!

Ebbtide glanced at his watch and

gave a start. He seized the telephone. It was high time to call Kiptoller. In fact, it was past seven o'clock.

Kiptoller didn't answer. Strange, thought Ebbitide. Kiptoller never failed to take care of the time-lock at seven every tenth day. Ebbitide waited a few minutes and tried again. No answer.

On his third trial he got unexpected results. A voice was on the wire. It was an odd voice; Ebbitide had never heard its like before. But what he heard was more than a little bit interesting. Ebbitide was intent.

"... hot off a tapped wire," the voice was saying. "Don't try to trace this call or you'll be shot in the back before you're a day older."

"Go ahead," said the other voice.

"Here it is," said the rasping nasal voice. "April tenth, *seven-twenty p.m.* Cream Puff Scores Again. Prominent Jeweler Murdered, Safe Robbed of Millions in Precious Gems.

"J. P. Kiptoller is dead and the famed Zandonian gems which he kept for Ebbitide Jones are gone. It's all in the day's work . . . (etc.) The body was found . . . at Chestnut Square. On the victim's chest lay a fresh cream puff . . .

"The body was identified . . . Other police officers forced an entrance . . . to find the large vault open and emptied. . . .

"... the letters from Ebbitide Jones, it will eventually be discovered, were only a part of the Cream Puff's set-up . . .

"The mummy case, it will be apparent, contained no mummy when it was delivered to Kiptoller's door. It contained the Cream Puff, very much alive. Later it contained Mr. Kiptoller, very much dead . . ."

Ebbitide looked at his watch. It was just *seven-twenty!*

## CHAPTER V

### Busy Alley

THE instant Pokey divested himself of the last word of news story he snipped the telephone tap wires, threw all his evidence in a sack, and beat it. One more job awaited him, the most important detail of all. He gunned his car down the street, breathing hard through his teeth.

Yes, the big moment was at hand. The final moment of his three big moments in this job.

The first of those three had come late in the afternoon when he had closed the Cream Puff in the mummy case and bolted the lid on the shipping crate that enclosed it.

"Nobody but Houdini could ever get out of that," he had said.

"Nobody but Houdini ever tried to do things like that for himself," the little overstuffed man had laughed complacently through the breathing window in his home-made mummy case. "Me, I get other folks to do all my work for me. Kiptoller will find his way into this crate, don't worry."

Not only had the form-fitting mummy's case been encased in the shipping crate; the crate had been plastered over with imitation shipping seals, which in turn had been partially defaced. All in all, Pokey had done an artistic job on the first of his three duties. The finished product had all the look of having come through by air freight from Egypt.

"Any chance that Kiptoller might not unpack you?" Pokey had finally asked. He hated to let the complacent Cream Puff know how trifling worries kept besetting his mind, but he had blurted it before he thought.

"Not a chance. The letter instructed him specifically to check contents at



once. And you checked on Kiptoller yourself."

"Right," Pokey had answered. "Kiptoller was in his shop when I passed there a couple hours ago."

"Then we're set," Cream Puff had said conclusively. "The taxi driver that drops me off at Kiptoller's freight door and an hour later picks up the same crate and carts it to the fountain at Chestnut Square has never been known to miss an appointment by a minute in his life. He'll pull through on the dot. He don't know what it's all about, the poor dope. Afterward the police will avalanche him, and he'll probably go paralyzed and tell ten different versions, none of them right. But we don't give a damn what happens to him."

"Right," Pokey had agreed, proud that the genius of murderers should have only one accomplice, and that that one should be himself.

And so Pokey had rolled the temporary mummy to the door where the taxi driver later found him, and detail number one had been checked off successfully.

**A**LL of that had taken place before the Cream Puff's six-thirty deadline.

Now, detail number two was concluded. The news story to the press agency had gone over the wire as fast as Pokey could read it. By this time—yes, it was already seven twenty-nine by the street clock—the presses would be rolling out a fresh headline for an early Sunday edition.

Pokey turned out of the Chestnut street traffic. He shot half a block east, veered swiftly, accelerated northward through the narrow alley.

He sharpened his eyes for job number three. Somewhere in this alley he would see a trash collector picking up papers on a stick. That would be

Cream Puff in disguise, with his case of jewels hidden in the bag of trash slung from his shoulder.

Pokey's pulse quickened at the sight of the mummy crate resting on the narrow ledge of a doorway numbered 607. Clock-work! That crate was full of dead Kiptoller. Within the next five minutes the ignorant taxi driver would deposit crate and corpse in the fountain. Within ten minutes the newsboys would be screaming the story all over the city. And Pokey and Cream Puff would be rolling along with the traffic listening to the hub-bub. What a man, that Cream Puff!

Pokey slackened his pace. He was near the end of the alley. He thought he had scrutinized every shadowed doorway that he had passed. He had seen no one collecting trash—oh-oh! There! That inconspicuous figure at the corner of the last building, that was his man.

Pokey took a backward glance through the night-black alley. No one back of him? Yes, there a taxi turned in from the farther end of the block. Swell! Everything on schedule.

Pokey eased almost to a stop beside the pudgy trash collector.

Almost without warning it happened.

It came with a low roar like a sea-going launch speeding wild through the streets. It swerved into the alley. If it had been a fire-truck storming at him full speed, Pokey would have had just as much chance of dodging it. More, in fact. This huge red monster was wide. It barely dodged the trash-picking pedestrian. It didn't dodge Pokey's car. Too late for another dodge.

Pokey jammed for the reverse. He knew that big red monster. He recognized the big steel mouth that opened toward him. But there was no time—

*Blunnnk! Zoommmmm!*  
Blackness!

**T**RIXIE GREEN JONES swallowed and ostrich egg. At least that's the way it felt. Only the darned thing didn't go down. It stuck in her throat, and a volley of heat waves shot through her head, and her feet went paralyzed all the way up to her heart, and her hands struck out at all the levers indiscriminately.

But it had happened. Just like that. The atom constrictor had swallowed up a car. And she was still cruising down the alley.

"Gee!" Trixie gasped. "Wait till Ebbtide hears—"

Her breath ran out, and she had a two-to-one feeling in favor of fainting. Instead, she slammed her fist down on the horn and sent a shuddering steamboat blast roaring down through the canyon. The taxi that was approaching from the other end changed its mind and backed out to wait for her.

"That's more like it," Trixie breathed.

At that moment the spotlight picked the number 607 off a door. Dizzily Trixie pulled the big machine to a halt, reached for the golf-ball-knobbed lever.

The steel claw reached out, the steel jaws opened to receive the crate, the inner powerhouse hummed pleasantly, the atom constrictor rolled merrily on its way.

"There!" Trixie said to herself as she turned onto Chestnut street. "Ebb can't say I didn't try!" Then with another gulp at that ostrich egg in her throat she added. "But somebody's going to miss his Saturday night joy-ride. I wonder who it was I bumped into."

## CHAPTER VI

### Trixie Wanted for Murder

**S**HE found the door of the big basement freight room still open. She

drove in, cut off the switch, bounded down from the driver's cab. By the time she reached the elevator she had regained sufficient composure to powder her pretty nose and smile weakly at the elevator boy.

"Is Ebbtide still here?"

"I think so, Mrs. Jones. He's been running around all over the building looking at the telephones."

"If you see him, tell him I'm waiting in his office."

Trixie's composure was good for not more than thirty seconds after she had closed the private office door behind her. Then she went blind with tears that were half rage and half fear. It was all Ebbtide's fault! She wouldn't have got in this jam if Ebbtide hadn't talked that way. But she was in now, all right. If she could only trade places with that fellow in the car that got swallowed up—

Goodness knows she hadn't meant to swallow him up. He had just bobbed up out of the dark so suddenly, and she had been doing her best to dodge that old trash picker-upper—

Maybe nobody would ever know. Maybe he was somebody that no one would ever miss, and the papers and the police would never find out. Never!

But what about the silver disc? Sooner or later it would have to be accounted for. She'd have to put a label of some kind on it. If not, Ebbtide would take it out someday, turn the electricity on and see it turn into a car with a man in it.

And what then? Would the man be alive? Trixie felt a fluttering of the heart. The *cat* had been alive. Still, cats and men were two different breeds, as Ebbtide would say, like cheese and mosquitoes.

No, there wasn't any use trying to sob herself into innocence. She was guilty! She was a hit-and-run-off-with-

the-victim driver! She'd be found out. The police would—

A police siren shrieked down the street.

Trixie huddled up in a chair in the corner and pulled Ebbtide's topcoat over her. She could still hear that siren. And now another one. They were cruising around this building.

Now the newsboys were shouting, *Extra!* What was it they were yelling? Trixie Jones wanted for murder? She strained to catch the words. They blurred against the noisy clamor of the streets. She couldn't make them out.

Trixie hovered between decisions—to stay right where she was until Ebbtide came, then tell him everything—or to steal down to the freight room and unflinchingly walk into the mouth of the atom constrictor, perhaps never to be seen alive again.

The latter course of action was what she really wanted. It appealed to her as a prison break might appeal to a condemned man. But somehow her faculties were paralyzed. All her mental arguments, all her gorgeous fancies about how Ebbtide would be sorry, failed to move her from her chair. She was scared stiff.

**B**UT when more than an hour had passed and she had heard nothing but the noises of the streets and seen nothing but the lights of the city out the window, her resolution grew stronger.

She opened the door, found the lighted corridor as empty of policemen as usual. She avoided the elevator. She tiptoed down three flights of stairs toward the freight basement.

On the final flight she ran into Ebbtide and a group of policemen coming up. She squealed and took flight. Ebbtide overtook her in three bounds.

"Trixie, we want you—"

"Let me go, Ebbtide!" she choked. "Hide me, quick—in the constrictor—"

"Hear that!" one of the policemen growled darkly from the foot of the stairs. "She's tryin' to make a gitaway. *That* fits."

"She's in on it, no question about it," another officer grunted.

Ebbtide released his grip on Trixie and whirled to face the ascending officers. So that was why they wanted to see his wife!

"Say that again," Ebbtide shouted, "and I'll mop up the stairs with you!"

"Easy, Jones, easy!" the sergeant tut-tutted. "No use to git fistic. This incriminatin' evidence is comin' together like a head-on crash."

The sergeant led the party back down to the freight basement and Trixie had the bewildering impression of being surrounded by a swarm of stern-looking strangers. Some of the officers sat down on the trunks and boxes that surrounded the big red vehicle. Under the blaze of ceiling lights the honeycomb of crystal barrels in the rear of the machine glowed brightly.

Beyond the atom constrictor, not far from the open freight door, a patrol wagon stood menacingly.

"Young lady," cracked the sergeant, "your husband has given us a mighty perty demonstration of how the silver discs in that machine puff up into whatever they're supposed to be. He's done us the kindness to roll out one disc after another and turn them into trunks and pianos and whatnot. He's converted every disc but two. Then he gits stubborn and quits. Claims those last two ain't labelled. Says you're the only one that knows. Which is jist what we thought."

"How do I know what they are?" Trixie gulped.

"Pretty thin," one cop whispered to another.

"The discs or the gal?" his companion retorted sarcastically.

"You'd *better* know," said the sergeant. "You were seen out joyriding between six and seven this evening—"

"I had an order to pick up at 706 Chestnut," said Trixie. "It was a storage item. I haven't a ghost of a notion what the contents were."

"Correction," the sergeant growled. "The address was 607 Chestnut."

"It was *seven-o-six!*" Trixie snapped emphatically. Then she reddened. "Or *was* it?" The memory of the spotlighted door flashed back on her. "Wait a minute—"

"What's the difference?" one of the officers muttered sarcastically. "Seven-o-six—six-o-seven. It's all the same to her."

"Just so it's Chestnut street," another cop chimed in, "it's all chestnuts to her."

Their asides were drowned by the sergeant's harsh bark. "Never mind the address. That's beside the point. The point is that she picked up Kiptoller's corpse."

**T**RIXIE'S fingers flew up. Her eyebrows leaped, her lips opened as if she were singing the high note in the opera. "Kiptoller's *what?*"

"Corpse, lady, corpse. A body that has been made dead by being stuck with a poison needle. In this case, the body of J. P. Kiptoller that you and your friend the Cream Puff murdered between seven and seven-thirty this evening—"

"E-e-e-ek!" Trixie came through with the opera singer's high note. It was a shrill wail that set up vibrations in the stacks of tin junk along the wall.

It also set up vibrations in Ebttide Jones. He leaped as if his wife's outcry were the signal for round one. His fists weren't going to stand for such

talk. But the two husky cops throttled him. Leave this to the sergeant, they said.

The sergeant restored a semblance of order. He made every one sit down. In addition to the swarm of policemen there were several plain-clothes men carrying on whispered conversations, now and then conferring with the sergeant on the side. Occasionally other officers or plain-clothes men would enter by the open basement door.

For all Trixie knew, this swarm of cops might lead her off to execution any minute. For all she knew, she deserved it. If she had just made a break for that atom constrictor while there was still time! Nothing could be more comfortable than to be tucked away in a crystal barrel, out of reach of these growling blood-thirsty cops.

The temperature inside those barrels, she reflected, was near absolute zero. Well, she was already frozen—

"You can't talk that way about my wife!" she heard Ebttide snarl. Boy, what a fighting eye he had! The sight of him, telling the cops off, brought the warm blood coursing back to her fingertips. "You've got nothing on her!"

"We will have as soon as we put the juice on these last two discs. Look 'em over, lady. Recognize 'em?"

Trixie gazed at the two bright discs. Wide as a car wheel, thin as paper, they gleamed with all the mystery of the scientist's atom world. Trixie knew what no one else knew. One of those discs was an unknown man in an automobile. She also knew what the police seemed to know—that the other disc was a wooden crate. But inside it was—*what?*

"Stop puttin' on the surprise act," the sergeant growled. "You're not so blank as all that. Let me refreshen your memory." He shoved his sergeant's cap to a cocky angle and began.

"Here's your game, play by play.

"FIRST you pulled the gold-digger act and got yourself married to Ebbtide, the Junk King."

"Why you blasted devil-shark!" Ebbtide howled. But the officers choked him off.

"Next, you got him to sign those fake letters givin' the instructions to Kiptoller and the porter. Oh, *we've* seen 'em. The signature's genuine, all right, but it don't make sense that Ebbtide Jones would steal his own jewels. It *does* make sense that you'd do it, especially after the Cream Puff ropes you into his clever scheme.

"So Kiptoller thinks Ebbtide Jones is sending a mummy back and wants it put in the safe at seven o'clock this evening. Come seven, the porter at Kiptoller's building hears the freight-door bell ring, finds the case waitin' on the platform. He wheels it through the main floor corridor to the inside door of the Kiptoller jewel shop, and calls in to Kiptoller, who is busy at the safe.

"Kiptoller opens the door and wheels the box in, and opens it up like your letter told him to. The minute he opens it, the mummy jumps out. It ain't a mummy, it's the Cream Puff!"

"Oh!" Trixie gasped.

"She's still actin'," a copper said.

"Doin' a damn good job," his companion retorted.

"The instant the Cream Puff jumps out," the sergeant continued, "he jabs Kiptoller with a poison needle, and Kiptoller falls dead. Then the Cream Puff takes all he wants out of the open safe and locks it up. We've got experts drillin' to get in and see how much of your husband's stuff he made off with.

"Anyhow, he locks up. Then he dumps the dead Kiptoller in the mummy case and closes him up in the shipping crate and sets him outside the

door. About seven-thirty the porter comes back. While the porter carts the crate back to the freight platform, supposin' it to be empty, that's when the Cream Puff walks out the main door of the buildin' weighed down with jewels.

"Then *you*, Mrs. Jones, you come along in your big red atom go-buggy and you snatch up the crate and ramble off. We've got the porter's eye-witness account and it'll hold water. He was just curious enough to know why that crate had to be put back on the platform instead of dumped with the trash, that he and two scrub-women watched to see what happened to it. They all three saw you—"

"Hold on!" Ebbtide broke in. "That don't prove nothing!"

"It proves that your wife was takin' charge of hidin' the corpse," the sergeant grunted sullenly.

ONE of the plain-clothes men interrupted at this point. He complained that, according to the newspaper, the Cream Puff had intended for the crate containing the corpse to be dumped in the fountain at Chestnut Square.

"That's all right," said the sergeant, yielding not an inch. "Mrs. Jones meant to carry out that instruction. But by the time she came to Chestnut Square the first reports of the Cream Puff's news story had already leaked out, and there was a handful of people, includin' two police, waitin' at the fountain. She took one look and turned the other way. Didn't you, Mrs. Jones? . . . *Didn't you?*"

"Why — I — that is, the traffic on Chestnut was crowded and I—" Trixie turned purplish.

"You turned off before you come to Chestnut Square!"

"Yes."

"Now we're gettin' places," said the sergeant in a voice as suave as a nutmeg grater. "So you seen you was stymied, so you give the corpse the works and turned it into a frozen disc and figured it would be safe hid until the Cream Puff told you what to do next . . . *Hold that bull!*"

The command was directed at the police who were trying to subdue the enraged Ebbitide; but it had the effect of preventing Trixie from attempting an answer.

"One moment," said one of the plainclothes men to the sergeant in a low off-side conversation. "A few questions before we open the evidence of those discs."

The sergeant and three or four others went into a huddle with the plainclothes man to make sure all points were clear. No, the Cream Puff hadn't been seen at any time by the porter; in fact, the porter had never actually *seen* Kip-toller at the time of delivering the crate. He had simply carried out the orders of the letter he had supposed was from Ebbitide Jones. But he had seen Ebbitide's wife make the pick-up—he and the two scrubwomen. Beyond this, all the information had come through the newspaper article itself.

"The Cream Puff's news service is always a sure shot," one of the reporters declared. "Dependable as a calendar. You police will probably never hear of him again after *this* job. Looks to me like he played Jones' wife for a sucker."

The prospect of a clean getaway for the Cream Puff annoyed the sergeant and his fellow officers. They fairly breathed fire. More determined than ever were they to slap the pressure on Trixie.

"Get the juice on those discs!" the sergeant snarled. "I'll bet my hat we get something pretty darned interesting out of them. Pretty interesting. . . !"

## CHAPTER VII

### Murder Will Out

STAN KENDRICK, the ingenious inventor of the two-dimensionalizing machine, should have been there. Never in his thousands of scientific experiments that had made this atom constrictor possible had he ever been surrounded by an audience so deeply engrossed in watching objects return to their normal dimensions as this excited group.

Ebbitide officiated. He caught the frightened consenting nod from Trixie and went to work. He brought the two discs out and let them clang to the concrete floor. When the clang died there was not a murmur. Tense silence gripped the spectators. The only sounds were the echoes of distant street noises and newsboys' cries of "*Extra! Extra! Cream Puff does it again!*"

Disc number one swelled rapidly. Soon, before all gaping eyes, it grew into a vast heap of dark metal. The officers began to shake their heads and mutter. This was not the wooden shipping crate they were after.

A few seconds more made it apparent that this object was mushrooming into an automobile. Suddenly it *was* an automobile—with a driver in it. *And the driver was Pokey!*

On the instant that the bell jangled the signal that the atoms were back to normal, the car gave a sudden jump—the way a car does when its engine starts in high—and roared into action.

Pokey gave one swift scared look at the band of policemen who jumped out of his way. He spun the steering wheel and headed for the open door.

Whether Pokey, upon his sudden awakening, was responding to a suspended determination to continue what he had been about before blackness had

engulfed him, or whether this was a fresh determination inspired by Pokey's feeling toward policemen, may never be known. Pokey jammed down on the throttle.

But Pokey never got to the door. Ebbtide Jones saw to that. Ebbtide, boiling over like a race horse on a diet of T.N.T., sprang at the car, caught the open window with one hand and Pokey's head with the other.

"Come back here, you dumb codfish!" Ebbtide yelled.

The car swerved. *BLAM! Clang! Clang! Clatterrr!* The car came to a stop half buried in a stack of junk.

"What the devil! Are you blind as well as dumb?" Ebbtide roared. "What are you running off for? Come over and explain yourself in your damned sign language. What do you mean, being clam-shelled up in that machine?"

**F**OR the five seconds that it took Ebbtide to divest himself on this tirade, Pokey stood in the open doorway of the car, his eyes passing over its twisted hood, over Ebbtide, over the line of uniformed police looking on in amazement. His eyes came to rest on the open door.

Pokey tried to make a dash for that door—this time on foot. But Ebbtide, whose suspicions had suddenly caught fire, ran after him like a long-legged all-American tackle and brought him down.

There was a blurred tangle of arms and legs, a furious thudding of fists. Ebbtide hadn't set out to pick a fight, but simply to capture a possible witness. However, the first swing of the husky office-boy's fist found Ebbtide in a ripe mood to reply at the rate of three or four to one. Ebbtide was famous for his bargains, and he knew when to give full measure. He gave.

"Aaf! Ugh! Stop it!" the dumb office boy shouted in lusty voice.

The cops plunged into the fracas and settled it with two pair of handcuffs. The two combatants, snorting and puffing and dusty, were forced to sit down on trunks.

Trixie crowded close to her steaming sweating husband.

"If I spend the rest of my life in jail," she breathed, "I'll never forget how wonderful you've been, Ebbtide."

Ebbtide blinked at her with bleary eyes, and his long boney face grew long with incomprehensibility. Then the tense hard silence of the spectators caught their attention. Everyone's eyes were on the bright object within their semicircle—the last disc.

It swelled. It assumed an angular, rectangular shape, box-like. It became a shipping crate. From the seals it bore, one might have been deceived into thinking it had come from Egypt by air freight. But none of this crowd was so deceived.

The bell rang. Someone detached the electric cord. The sergeant went to work with a small bar, ripping the box open as if he were wrecking a house. The bug-eyed policemen made each other stand back.

Two of them lifted the mummy case out of the crate. The sergeant went to work on the lid. The coffin-like shape of the thing altered his mood. He ceased to be a one-man wrecking crew and became a tiptoeing undertaker. While he pried at the lid another officer bent down to the breathing window and shot a flashlight beam inside.

"Corpse, all right," the officer muttered. His low words sent a shudder through the tense onlookers. He added in a spine-chilling half-whisper: "There's a cream puff on his chest."

The sergeant burst the lid open. The contents lay revealed. Everyone craned for a glimpse of the dead Kiptoller. The encased figure was as mo-

tionless as a chunk of concrete. On its chest lay a tempting cream puff. In the fingers of one hand was a small silvery instrument with a needle point.

"*That ain't Kiptoller!*" Ebbitide Jones blurted.

"Hell, no, *it's the Cream Puff!*" the sergeant yowled, leaping backward as if the case was full of rattlesnakes all set to strike.

"How do you know?" the dumb office boy blurted through his missing teeth. A hard glare from Ebbitide made him pull in his neck; but no one else paid any attention to him. Everyone was talking, and everyone knew that here, by some odd chance, was the long lost Cream Puff. There had been a slip somewhere, all right. But the Cream Puff's own news story about the poison needle clinched his identity.

"Stand back, men!" the sergeant shouted. "He might be playin' possum."

SEVERAL police stood with guns ready and glued their eyes on the silver needle in the motionless fingers.

"Watch him, there. He'll come to life in a minute. The other guy did."

But a long minute of frozen waiting brought not the slightest movement from the dark overstuffed man in the open mummy case. The silence gave way to puzzled murmurs. Where was Kiptoller? Was he dead or alive? Had Kiptoller and the Cream Puff struggled? Had the Cream Puff accidentally jabbed himself? The plain-clothes men stooped closer to the case but could see no signs of blood.

"This fellow hasn't been in no scuffle," Ebbitide declared, craning over the shoulders of the officers. "He's as fresh as that cream puff sitting on his chest."

The sergeant put Ebbitide's statement to a test by munching the cream

puff, an exercise which presently sharpened his mental processes.

"Kiptoller's got to be somewhere," the sergeant observed.

"He *is*," said Ebbitide, beginning to pace back and forth past the fresh mummy, jerking awkwardly at the handcuffs behind his back and gesturing with his elbows. "And as soon as I can figure *where* that pearl-setting rooster of a Kiptoller is, the rest is easy."

The sergeant, after a hurried whispered conversation with his plain-clothes men, gave a nod to Ebbitide. "Okay, berserk, give us your version. If we like it we'll undo your handcuffs."

"To start with," said Ebbitide, "Kiptoller was *out*."

Pokey started to interrupt, but he caught a look from Ebbitide, swallowed hard, and stayed dumb.

"Kiptoller was *out*," Ebbitide continued, "*so* there wasn't no one to let the Cream Puff out of the case. That's what let him down. The rest that happened makes no difference. The Cream Puff never got out, *so* he never killed nobody, and he never robbed no safe."

"Go on," said the sergeant.

"Well, at the appointed time the porter came back to the inside jewelry shop door like he was supposed to. He never saw Kiptoller. There was the case. He wheeled it out to the rear door like he thought he was supposed to, according to that faked letter. The Cream Puff never hollered for fear of getting caught. He knew he was in a jam, but he figured he'd get his chance to break out after someone or other was carting him away—"

"A taxi driver," an officer put in. "We've cleared up that end of the setup."

"And he probably figured," Ebbitide went on, "that as quick as he got out of his jam he'd take his murdering out on whoever let Kiptoller slip



through his fingers." Ebbtide shot a searching look at the burly battered office boy. "I think you're lucky to be in handcuffs, Pokey."

"On with your story," cracked the sergeant.

"THAT'S about all," said Ebbtide. "Except that my wife happened along in the atom constrictor and swallowed up box, Cream Puff, and all—"

"She was tryin' to hide him away!" the sergeant growled.

"Nothing of the kind," broke in a plain-clothes officer authoritatively. "She got her addresses mixed."

"Then she grabbed him alive?" the sergeant muttered.

"Exactly," said the plain-clothes officer, and the others chimed in with their agreement. "That's it, in a Chestnut shell, just like Ebbtide told it. It's all clear but two points. First, where is Kiptoller. And second, who'd the Cream Puff have helping him?"

"And third," said Ebbtide, "how soon is that bloated mummy gonna come to life?"

Another silence with all eyes turned toward the motionless Cream Puff. One of the officers shook his head and stalked out to call the coroner.

Into Ebbtide's handcuffed fingers slipped the hand of Trixie. She looked up at him wistfully, guiltily.

"Ebbtide," she whispered, "I've just remembered something."

"She's just remembered something," Ebbtide gulped, shifting his eyes toward the sergeant.

"Kiptoller told me to tell you, and I forgot," said Trixie breathlessly. "He told me, it was, let me see, five days ago—I remember, because it was the day I was so busy getting the new system started—"

"He told you *what*?"

"That he had fixed the time lock for an extra ten days so he could get away this weekend. He said if he hadn't heard from you by five this afternoon he was going to jump in his private plane and hop over to that China address I gave him and meet you—"

Ebbtide almost snapped a handcuff. But at that instant another policeman sirened in from the street on a motorcycle.

"Sergeant!" the newcomer bellowed as he roared to a stop. "Headquarters just now got a radiogram from Kiptoller. Says he's out in his plane. Says he just picked up the radio news of his death. Wants to know what's the gag. Says to postpone the funeral till he gets back."

"Smart guy!" the sergeant blazed. "Go back and radio him that he was supposed to be dead, but Trixie Jones got her signals mixed. In fact, she's got everything mixed." The perspiring sergeant turned to the Junk King. "Ebbtide, did you know what kind of a wife you was marryin'?"

"I knew she was a good mixer," Ebbtide grunted, and his wife blushed and smiled. "Another thing I know." Ebbtide turned his fierce fighting eyes on Pokey. "You've done a sweet job playing dumb, Pokey, but I must have punched your sound button or something. From a couple of things you've said, I figure you'll talk like a trained seal when you get to the police station. How'd you and your car happen to be in that atom machine?"

Pokey preferred to remain dumb, but the plain-clothes officer supplied the answer. "He got caught in the wrong alley."

"Right," said Ebbtide. "He didn't get *his* addresses mixed. Nor his news stories either. It was his voice I heard on the wire, calling in the murder that didn't come off."

A minute or two later a search of Pokey's car yielded the tap-in telephone and other juicy bits of evidence. The patrol wagon carted Pokey away.

IT took the coroner all of an hour to come to a decision. He wasn't used to making post mortems on mummies, he said. But at last there was his answer: "Dead. Death from concussion."

"Gee!" Trixie gasped, clutching Ebbtide's handcuffs. "What'll they do with me? Electrocute me or hang me?"

The perspiring sergeant pushed his cap to the back of his head and laughed for the first time. "Young lady, owing to the fact that the Cream Puff was wanted dead or alive, I don't see how anyone can keep you from gettin' in on the reward."

"Whoops!" Trixie did an impromptu

dance on the empty mummy case. "Me—a reward! You hear that, Ebb? I'm a hero-ine!"

"Hero-ine!" Ebbtide grunted. "Shush! Snail soup! You're just lucky. It ain't once in a whale's age that a guy as clever and puffed-up with importance as the Cream Puff lets himself get trapped like this."

"Damned if I can figure it out," the sergeant mumbled, after the corpse, the coroner and the crowd were gone, and only he and Trixie and Ebbtide were left. "How was it that that big boy you called Pokey came out of the atom crusher alive and the Cream Puff came out dead?"

"That's easy," Ebbtide grinned. "A guy like that egotistical Cream Puff can't stand to be deflated. Now, how about letting me out of these cuffs?"

## « « FANTASTIC ODDITIES » »

ONE of Old Sol's recent and certainly most annoying stunts occurred during the construction of the San Francisco Bay bridge. When it rose, it drew the tops of the bridge towers almost two inches east each morning. As Old Sol moved through the heavens, the towers moved with it.

Only two inches, but this was enough to make a costly and disturbing difference. For the workmen, in fitting and riveting crossbeams, made the unhappy discovery that the sun's attraction had made it impossible to do their riveting in the daytime! The only solution was to wait until nightfall, when Old Sol was through with his pranks, and fit the crossbeams then.

OUR lives today differ far more radically from our grandfathers' than did their's from their ancestors of two thousand years ago. To show this more dramatically we can "speed up" things a bit and assume that only a year ago men were learning to use sticks and stones as weapons. Then, only last week, someone developed the art of skillfully shaping stones to fit his needs.

The day before yesterday man was sufficiently an artist to use simplified pictures as symbols in writing. Yesterday the alphabet was introduced, and bronze was the most universal metal.

Yesterday afternoon the Greeks were developing their brilliant civilization, and only last mid-

night Rome fell, obscuring the rise of civilization for several minutes.

Galileo observed his falling bodies at 8:15 this morning, and by ten o'clock the first practical steam engine was built.

At 11 A.M. Faraday's law of electro-magnetism was developed, which by 11:30 had given us the telegraph, electric power, the telephone, and the incandescent lamp.

At 11:30 x-rays were discovered, followed by radium and wireless telegraphy. Only an hour ago the first automobile came into use, and in the last half hour we have seen the development of the aeroplane, air mail delivery, and world-wide broadcasts by short wave radio.

And just a few weeks ago, our ancestors were gingerly walking around on their legs for the first time, and deciding that it might be a good idea to keep at it!

Three minutes ago, Hitler invaded the low countries and the second world war began!

IF you live in or around Pittsburgh, Pa., don't be alarmed if you notice yourself going "up in the air" every day.

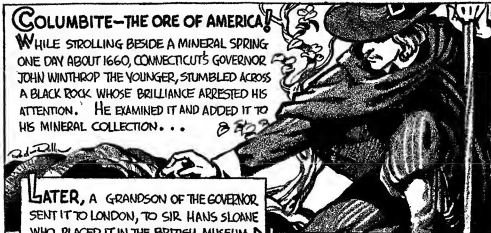
Which is just a way of telling you that scientists have discovered that, due to moon tides, the solid crust of the earth in that vicinity is rising and falling from thirteen to twenty-three inches each day.

But if you notice it, we'll be surprised!

# Romance of the Elements---Columbium

## COLUMBITE--THE ORE OF AMERICA!

WHILE STROLLING BESIDE A MINERAL SPRING ONE DAY ABOUT 1660, CONNECTICUT'S GOVERNOR JOHN WINTHROP THE YOUNGER, STUMBLED ACROSS A BLACK ROCK WHOSE BRILLIANCE ARRESTED HIS ATTENTION. HE EXAMINED IT AND ADDED IT TO HIS MINERAL COLLECTION. . .



LATER, A GRANDSON OF THE GOVERNOR SENT IT TO LONDON, TO SIR HANS SLOANE WHO PLACED IT IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.



## NOT UNTIL 1801

DID WINTHROP'S FRAGMENT RECEIVE SCIENTIFIC ATTENTION. THEN CHARLES WACKETT NOTICED IT, ANALYZED A PORTION—AND ANNOUNCED A NEW ELEMENT! COLUMBIUM, HE CALLED IT, IN HONOR OF AMERICA; BUT FOR 43 YEARS NO ONE BELIEVED IN HIS DISCOVERY. INDEED, NO ONE ISOLATED THE PURE METAL UNTIL 1866. ONLY A SMALL SPECIMEN OF PURE COLUMBIUM EXISTED UNTIL 1929.

IN ADDITION TO COLUMBIUM, WINTHROP'S PIECE OF COLUMBITE ORE CONTAINED TITANIC, TITANIC AND TUNGSTIC ACIDS; CERIA, YTTRIA, THURIA AND ZIRCONIA!



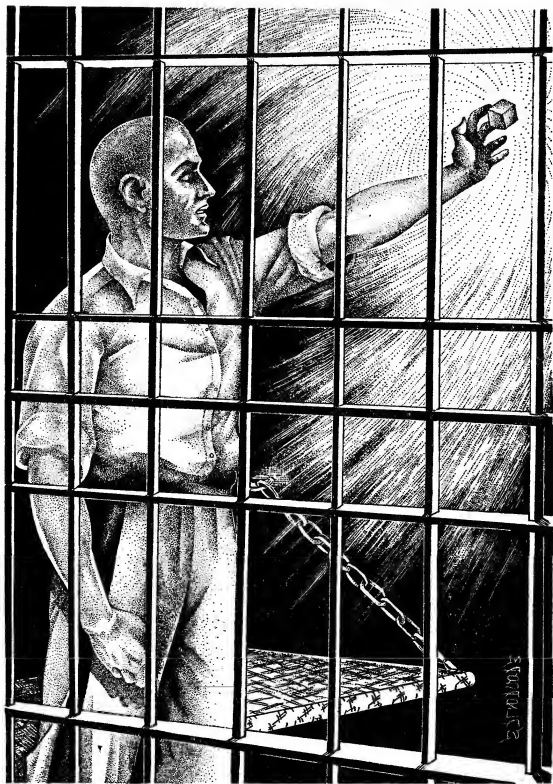
## A "CINDERELLA" ELEMENT

TIN MINERS OF NIGERIA ONCE CURSED COLUMBITE; IT CLUNG TENACIOUSLY TO TIN; WAS DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE. THEN RESEARCH DISCLOSED THAT FERRO-COLUMBIUM ADDED TO CHROMIUM-NICKEL STEEL, REDUCES INTERGRANULAR CORROSION; MAKES STAINLESS STEEL MORE DUCTILE. NIGERIAN MINING INTERESTS RAVED OVER THEIR STACK PILES; CASHED IN ON THEIR DISCARDED COLUMBITE. NOW COLUMBIUM IS RESPECTED. THEY SAY THE PURE METAL HAS A FUTURE IN JEWELRY.



COLUMBIUM is number 41 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is Cb and its atomic weight is 93.1. It is a steel-gray metal. Its specific gravity is 7.06 and melting point 1,950°. It is malleable and may be welded. It burns on heating in air. It has the hardness of wrought iron in massive pieces, soluble in sulphuric acid. It is now vastly important in the making of many alloys.

NEXT MONTH—The Romance of Copper



Peter Fereny reached out and touched the cube with a hand that trembled

# Peter Fereny's DEATH CELL

By WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

THE mighty cathedral chimes tolled out the hour, mournfully, majestically, and their reverberations spread over the sleeping city like a soft blanket of sound before blending into the silent darkness of the night.

—nine—ten—eleven!

Peter Fereny could see his whitening knuckles on the dark, smooth bars and could feel the hysteria that was mounting in his breast. Eleven o'clock! In another hour the guards would be coming for him and he would join them in that long last walk from which he would never return. Strapped to the chair like a wild beast to await the blasting bolt that would shatter forever the protoplasm that was Peter Fereny.

He choked back a sob and jerked his hands from the bars and jammed them viciously into the pockets of his regulation gray trousers. His teeth bit painfully into his lower lip and he increased the pressure until the agony drove away his terror. Then he slumped to his bunk, tasting the salty blood in his mouth. He wouldn't let himself go, he vowed fiercely. He'd go out on his own two feet and he'd go out smiling.

He'd never give them the satisfaction of seeing him funk out.

He smiled then, smiled at his tightly clenched fists, his ruthless determination. For Peter Fereny was not the ruthless type. He wasn't a hard-eyed gangster or killer, but merely a middle-aged man who'd been convicted of a murder. The fact that he hadn't committed the murder, the fact that he'd been deliberately framed, he thought wearily, had little bearing on the case. Law and Justice, he had discovered, were two separate abstractions with little in common.

He shook his head and tried to distract his thoughts for the old raging bitterness was welling within him. Framed by his wife and his best friend! That

**Fereny was doomed to die in the electric chair. But in his cell he heard a weird voice—and found the key to a doorway to another world**

was the thing that had nearly driven him wild. They wanted him out of the way so that they could continue legally and openly the affair that they had been carry-

ing on behind his back.

It wasn't so much that he was going to die—it was the thought of their deceit, their greed, their dishonesty that filled him with the wild, horribly impotent feeling of injustice.

He sighed then. It was not only their betrayal that affected him, it was the realization that the world itself, with its breadlines, its wars, its hunger and poverty and lying and greed was reflected in their actions.

Funny—he hadn't noticed it before—but now it was all too clear. He rose from his bunk and began pacing the narrow cell nervously. How much longer? Forty-five minutes—thirty? Instinctively his right hand clenched, drew back and then pounded into his left palm. Automatically, he repeated the gesture but this time his fist *thudded against a solid, hard substance!*

A CRY of pain escaped him as he rubbed his aching, stinging knuckles. He swallowed nervously and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. Cautiously he extended his hand in the direction his fist had been traveling and this time he felt a hard surface with his fingers. His eyes widened incredulously. His fingers were apparently touching nothing but air, but under them he could feel a hard, strangely foreign, invisible surface. He touched it with his other hand, struggling to discount the evidence of his eyes and to believe the evidence of his sense of touch.

Yes, there was something there! An object of some sort, about eight inches square, suspended by some means in the middle of his cell. But what was it? How had it gotten there? What was the secret of its invisibility?

He staggered backward and collapsed on his bunk, his reason frantically attempting to answer the questions his mind had raised.

Was he going crazy? Had—

*"Oh, thank you very much for helping us!"*

Fereny scrambled to his feet, glaring wildly about him. Someone—some-

thing had whispered to him! Thanked him! And the voice came from within his cell!

"Oh, God," he groaned. "I'm going mad, I'm—"

*"Don't be alarmed."* The tiny whispering voice caressed his ears. *"You can't see us, but we're right here with you."*

Fereny clapped his hands over his ears. He sank onto the bunk, a thin stream of saliva drooling from his lips. He could feel his mind tottering on the brink of madness.

"Go away," he moaned. "Leave me alone. You're not there, nothing's there, but go away."

Fereny heard a laugh then, a tinkling, silvery little laugh.

*"We're very sorry if we've frightened you, but there's really nothing to be frightened about."*

Fereny pressed his hands tighter into his ears but he could hear the voice as if it were *inside* his head.

*"You've helped us so very much that we'd feel terrible if we thought you were afraid of us. We've tried so long and so often to come through that we'd just about given up hope. As a matter of fact we're not really through yet. But we're very close and if you'll just give us one more little shove we can make it."*

Fereny straightened his eyes traveling helplessly about the cell.

"Who are you?" he asked dazedly.

*"Why, I'm surprised at you,"* the merry little voice continued, *"I thought you'd figure that out. But since you can't I'll have to tell you. We're from the fourth dimension."*

"THE fourth dimension?" Fereny breathed incredulously. "Why—why you can't be."

The tinkling laugh sounded again.

*"Why can't we?"*

"Because — because —" Fereny's voice died away. He was going mad! Talking to himself. The next thing—

"We realize it's quite a shock," the tiny voice rambled on gaily, "but you might just as well get used to it now as later. We've tried for years to get through to the third dimension and we're more determined now than ever. We built a relative dimensional corridor and you opened the door for us. Not all the way but you opened it a crack. We can't quite squeeze through but a few more inches and we'll be able to. You will help us won't you?"

"I don't know," Fereny said desperately, "I don't know whether I'm sane or not."

"Oh you're sane enough," the little voice said encouragingly "but you're just a little hard to convince. If you'll just open the door all the way we can step right out and you can see for yourself. We're only about half as big as you but we're easy enough to see."

Fereny's skepticism and distrust began to vanish.

"What makes you think I'll help you?" he asked.

Again he heard the tinkling, tiny laugh.

"You're fooling now. You've got to help us."

"Why?" Fereny asked.

"Because we like you," the little voice said gaily, "and when you like someone they can't refuse your requests. That's the rule here."

"What if you don't like somebody?" Fereny asked.

Again the laugh, tinkling in his ears.

"Silly," the little voice chortled, "everybody likes everybody here. That's the rule too."

"I may not be able to help you," Fereny said dubiously, "I'm in jail, y'know."

"Where's that?" the voice asked.

"It's a place where we put bad people," Fereny found himself blushing as he explained.

"Bad?" the little voice was puzzled.

"You know," Fereny went on. "People who steal something that doesn't belong to them, or people who—who kill someone—things like that."

"But why should people do things like that?" the little voice seemed saddened. "Don't the people there like each other?"

"Not always," Fereny said. "You see the people here are a little different than you. They fight and they steal and sometimes one man will gain a great amount of power and then he'll force people to act and believe and think as he wants them to and if they don't he'll kill them. Then we have other things. Breadlines, hunger, poverty, unemployment—"

"What are they?" the little voice interrupted.

FERENY paused and then he said slowly.

"They are the things that result when people stop liking each other." It seemed very simple at that moment.

"But our system is so much simpler," the perplexed little voice said. "We just like each other and we never have any trouble. I'm sure we'll be able to show you people how to be a lot happier and save yourselves a lot of trouble."

"That's been tried before," Fereny said cynically.

"Why are you in jail?" the little voice asked suddenly, "you're kind. You couldn't have hurt anyone."

"I didn't," Fereny smiled. "But I'm going to die in a few minutes."

"And you didn't do anything?" the little voice was indignant.

"No," Fereny said. "I didn't hurt a soul. But things work out that way here sometimes."

"Now listen," the little voice was excited, "let us in and we'll help you. It isn't right that you should suffer for something you didn't do. It's terrible. There are many of us and we'll help you. We'll help you with all our might. We have to because we like you."

Fereny looked up suddenly. Shadows were moving slowly along the corridor toward his cell. Two shadows topped with sharp visored caps and one shadow with a tri-cornered hat. Fereny knew they were coming. The guards and the priest.

"You can't help me," he said quietly, "but I appreciate your offer just the same. You know I believe I like you too."

"It isn't right," the little voice was anguished, "that you should be sacrificed for something you didn't do. Now listen closely. We can save you by bringing you into the fourth dimension. The door to our world is in the middle of your cell. It's the block you touched a minute ago. When you raise it the doorway will be opened and you can save yourself."

FOR an instant Fereny was too stunned to act and then he sprang to his feet and clutched the invisible block. It was wild and impossible, but it was sufficient to fan the embers of hope to a fiery, raging holocaust. His fingers trembled as they clutched the invisible door.

"What do I do?" he begged. "Please tell me."

"Just lift it up," the little voice instructed him, "and it will destroy forever the veil that has existed between the two dimensions. Careful not to push the cube down for that would close

the door forever."

Fereny heard the slow, measured steps approaching. He peered up for an instant and he saw, silhouetted against the end wall of the corridor, the heavy, ominous shadow of the chair.

It symbolized in a flash the cruel, vicious, greedy world from which he was escaping. Suddenly Fereny paused, realizing what he was about to do. He was going to establish a contact between this world of the electric chair and a world of such simplicity and kindness and sympathy as he had never believed existed.

What would happen to the creatures of such a world when they were brought into a contact with the grasping greed of the third dimension? Suddenly Fereny smiled thinking of their simple beautiful philosophy. To have that destroyed would be far too dear a price to pay for his own escape.

"Good bye," he whispered. Then he pressed down with all his strength on the invisible object beneath his fingers. For an instant there was a pressure under his hands and then—nothing. And Fereny knew the doorway had been closed forever!

LATER AS THE lights dimmed and flickered for the third time, a bulky guard turned to his companion.

"Funny, ain't it?" he whispered, "he didn't seem to mind. He was smiling and beaming all the time I was strapping him into the chair. Like he was just going to meet his best friend. That's the way those guys get, though, stir crazy. Take him—for the last hour in his cell he don't do nothin' but sit there and talk to himself. Now would a guy in his right mind act like that?"

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#### NEXT MONTH

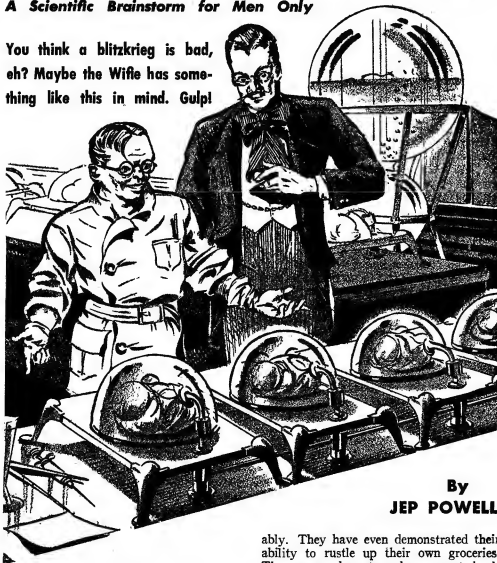
"THE LIVING DEAD" ANOTHER CARSON OF VENUS STORY.  
By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS



# MAN, AN UNNECESSARY EVIL

*A Scientific Brainstorm for Men Only*

You think a blitzkrieg is bad, eh? Maybe the Wife has something like this in mind. Gulp!



By  
**JEP POWELL**

**D**ON'T look now—but I think the ladies over there are puckering their red-enameled lips to give us a whopping dish of razberries.

They figure they've learned at long last how to get along without us. I mean absolutely and utterly. Within the last few decades they have invaded the sanctity of our barber shops and saloons, they took up smoking and learned to cuss right credit-

ably. They have even demonstrated their ability to rustle up their own groceries. These encroachments we have accepted gallantly and philosophically—maybe helplessly. But now—

You'd better take a deep breath here, brother.

Now they threaten to wrest from us the very last thing that we could call exclusively and undeniably our own—fatherhood.

Not that any of them would aspire to assume that function. Unutterably worse, they would simply abolish it. They would go merrily on perpetuating the species with-

out us. We would become as extinct as the dodo, whose only place now is in a crossword puzzle.

B-but how could they d-do it? you gasp.

By the simple little trick of parthenogenesis, my useless friend. And that word is not as mysterious as it sounds. It simply means reproduction of the species without benefit of a father. Some low \* forms of animal life have been practicing it for many years and doing very well, thank you. Notable among them are the sea urchin and certain plant lice.

The most recent development in parthenogenesis (and a terrifying one to us) was a demonstration by Dr. Gregory Pincus of Clark University, proving that this biogenetic phenomenon is possible in mammalian creatures, the highest order of which is mankind.

Aided and abetted by Dr. Pincus, a female albino rabbit produced a daughter that was as fatherless as a candy Easter egg. This fatherless bunny was "conceived" in a test tube. Dr. Pincus took a natural ovum of a normal chinchilla doe rabbit and fertilized it artificially. He then impregnated the albino doe with the fertilized ovum and in due time the parthenogenetic offspring was born, a frisky chinchilla doe. She was normal in every physical respect. She thrived under Dr. Pincus' care, was mated naturally upon reaching maturity, and produced a normal litter.

This fatherless mother, herself, was the product of an ovum (egg) artificially fertilized with a simple salt solution. However, Dr. Pincus revealed that in other of his experiments fertilization had been achieved simply by subjecting the ova briefly to a temperature of 45 degrees centigrade (113 degrees Fahrenheit).

**A**LTHOUGH modest newspaper accounts announced the birth of the first parthenogenetic mammal known to science, Dr. Pincus did not make public a comprehensive explanation of his experiments until the twelfth annual Graduate Fortnight of the New York Academy of Medicine at which he presented his test tube doe in an exhibit along with charts and microphotographs which showed that the ova artificially fertilized and transplanted develop in

all stages until birth exactly as do normally fertilized ones.

Dr. Pincus' experiments, aided by grants from the Dazian Foundation and the Josiah Macy, Jr., Foundation, were begun in search of clinical knowledge that would make possible the birth of healthier human beings. It was emphasized that this was the ultimate purpose of the work. But if one mammalian female can reproduce without benefit of male, why cannot another? Why cannot woman, highest of mammalian females?

When I did my research work for "The Synthetic Woman" \* I soon found myself up to my ears in data that had me gasping. I suppose that is because I'm a gullible soul, easily floored by scientific phenomena. The true scientist probably can take his science with a grain of salt. Yet a grain of salt was all one scientist needed to make a rabbit.

My research may not have convinced me that mankind could be reproduced parthenogenetically but, in the light of Dr. Pincus' achievements, neither did it convince me it could not happen. So my reeling imagination began to envision the birth of a new creation in which mankind would be perpetuated without males.\*\*

And what would keep a male baby from popping up now and then in a parthenogenetic age? Because all parthenogenetic creatures must inevitably be females. The sex-determining element known as Y-chromosome can be furnished only by the male. Hence, no male offspring could be produced without a natural father. If that's any consolation, hop on it and cherish it. But there's little solace in the possession of an element absolutely essential to produce something utterly unnecessary.

Not only might mankind be perpetuated without a father but, conceivably, without a mother, in the sense we regard a mother. The doe rabbit that bore Dr. Pincus' paradoxical bunny did not furnish the ovum that produced it. She merely served as an incubator mother, or "host" mother. The offspring was "conceived" in a test tube.

**T**HE scientist's experiments with progesterone, a hormone from the corpus lu-

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\* *Amazing Stories*, September, 1940.

\* Low is used here both biologically and sentimentally.

\*\* "Amazons of a Weird Creation", *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES*, June, 1941.

teum, and with such growth stimulants as glutathione, estrol and estradiol hint that even further maturation in glass incubators may be possible. Certainly Dr. Alexis Carrel's experiments with living tissues would strengthen the hope of scientists for such an achievement.

It would seem that Aldous Huxley read only part of the handwriting that inspired his "Brave New World".

Dr. Pincus is not the first scientist to delve into parthenogenesis in mammals. O. Van der Stricht, in 1901, claimed to have noted "the beginning of a true parthenogenesis" in his observations of a bat. Development ceased, however, at an early stage.

W. Rubaschkin, observing a guinea pig in 1906, and M. Athias, observing a dormouse in 1909, both discovered what appeared to be parthenogenetic development similar to natural maturation. But again, as in the case of Van der Stricht's bat, development did not carry on.

Several years later H. M. Kingery, department of histology and embryology, Cornell University, dismissed the idea of parthenogenesis in mammals with the belief that "the process was one of degenerative fragmentation and not parthenogenetic cleavage", whatever that means. To this bewildered mind it means that Dr. Kingery didn't take much stock in the possibility of *natural* parthenogenesis in mammals. His conclusion was offered in a paper "So-called Parthenogenesis in the White Mouse" which was published in the Marine Biological Laboratory Bulletin (1914).

That word *natural* in the foregoing paragraph carries a lot of significance. It would seem that Dr. Kingery and the other scientists before him were simply observing natural processes, whereas Dr. Pincus undertook to *cause* artificial parthenogenesis—and succeeded.

OF importance also was Dr. Kingery's observation of formations of what he

called "daughter chromosomes" which, I suppose, are the opposite of the Y-chromosomes which determine male sex. He also found development "similar to natural maturation." Does that suggest, then, considering Dr. Pincus' more recent achievement, a natural atavistic parthenogenetic tendency in mammals? If so, such waning tendency might date back to our bi-celled ancestors who floundered around in the palaeozoic ooze. And if that is so, why didn't creation continue parthenogenetically? How did the male ever creep into the picture with his paltry Y-chromosome? (I hope they're putting zippers on strait-jackets this season.)

It seems like the height of something or other that it had to be a man who revealed to the weaker sex that they may become self-sufficient. But we must not judge Brother Pincus too harshly. With gals poking their powdered proboscises into test tubes, retorts and such, they would have gotten hep sooner or later anyway.

What to do about it?

What do you do about anything they set their minds on? Nothing, brother. And the less of that, the better.

On chilly nights when you feel a pair of icy feet snuggle against your spine, just say nothing and be a good foot-warmer. And, of course, there's the matter of closing the window in the morning a half hour before getting up time. Better put down that morning paper occasionally to say something cute over your breakfast egg, too.

There are sundry humble ways in which we may, in a small degree, justify our existence and we'd damsoon better start learning them now that we're on the very verge of becoming an unnecessary evil.

Something's gone haywire along the way since Adam was boss of the Garden and Eve was his dutiful spouse. She was a gentle, unassuming creature made out of one of his ribs. Now look! His giving up that rib may have been the origin of the expression "pulling a boner."

#### FANTASTIC PLAYGROUND

UNTIL the outbreak of the present war, the London Zoo featured a unique service for children in its Pet Corner. By paying a small fee, tiny tots were allowed to romp with a variety of animals which were selected for their gentleness. One popular pet of the children was an old and gigantic tortoise which they were allowed to ride. On the front end

of the tortoise's shell was painted the warning "This End Bites". The most popular of all pets, however, was a lion cub. Other strange pets for rent to the kids were a baby eland, a kinkajou, a penguin, a tame snake (not so popular), a baby yak, a chimpanzee, some small alligators, and a llama!

William P. McGivern.

# »»» Introducing ««« THE AUTHOR



JEP POWELL

**S** IRED by a Baptist minister and raised by a devout Christian mother, I was purged early of any latent makings of a top-flight worldling. It is with a deep sense of shame that I am unable to tell of rip-snorting escapades in far-flung corners of the world. I confess I ain't been nowhere and never saw nothing.

Like Malcolm Jameson, who wrote "The Moon Eater" in your other magazine, my early days were spent in a lunatic asylum. I was born there. (Milledgeville, Ga., 1901.) I hasten to explain that my uncle was a doctor at the asylum, and Mother went there so I could happen in his bungalow on the campus. I was spirited away shortly after the event—a move my friends now regard as timely, and fortunate.

I missed my calling. I should have been an artist. I could draw creditable pictures before I could write legibly. In grammar school (public school down in Georgia), my talent began to lean toward caricature and satirical cartoons. My teachers unanimously discouraged my art.

World War No. 1 ended while I was in college, taking R. O. T. C. training and looking forward to becoming a "shavetail" in the army. Soon thereafter, I sallied forth to conquer the world. Since then I have made several desultory and unfruitful efforts toward the same goal.

After keeping books for a while and then selling pianos, I decided I should go into business for myself. Somebody had a restaurant for sale. I bought it. I had no experience in this line but possessed an incontinent appetite and thought the venture a good idea. In two months I gained fifteen pounds and lost \$1,600.

My art began to itch. I failed to make the art department but landed in classified ads—*Atlanta Constitution*—from which vantage point I planned to work my way to the drawing board. It didn't happen. The great exodus from Georgia swept me into Florida during the real estate boom of the weird Twenties. While everyone else was making money buying and selling lots, I toiled away as a reporter, rewrite man and copy-reader on various Florida papers.

When the Florida bubble burst, I went to Chicago. I landed a copy-reading job on a daily racing paper, the day before I was fired from the *Herald-Examiner* copy desk for writing an unfunny "head" on a one-paragraph story about the Prince of Wales taking a ride without coming a-cropper.

The reason for having sought another job was a Damoclean sword over the heads of all the toilers around that hysterical desk. Being fired from the *Herald-Ex* instead of quitting at the end of the week served to keep my record unbroken.

For some reason I never quite understood, I became editor of a racing paper, then general manager. It was in the latter capacity that I saw my first horse race. It was in the same capacity that I okayed some cartoons for a racing weekly under my supervision. The cartoons were signed "Jep."

My paper folded because of labor trouble and a bitter battle with NRA. The labor trouble cost me a fairly lucrative job but it afforded me brief importance—I had a bodyguard.

After a short time in Cincinnati, I migrated again to Florida. Between newspaper jobs there I was press agent, radio script writer, shyster commercial artist and advertising copy writer. Also I starved a little.

In New York, I've written free-lance factual stuff for racing publications.

Increasing deafness forced me to try fiction, an ability which I have long suspected. I wrote a detective novelet. It bounced. I wrote several short-shorts. They bounced. The story of an incubator girl was my first attempt at fantasy fiction.

James Exam Powell, Jr., was the name under which I was originally launched, but my father died before I was a year old, eliminating the necessity for the "Junior." I dropped the "Exam" as

soon as I was old enough to rebel against silly family names. I've been called James, Jimmy, Jep and a lot of things I'd blush to repeat.

I've been married—spasmodically, you might say—for ten years. But it is always the same girl. I am the last male of my line of Powells and, so far, have accomplished nothing toward perpetuating the breed. I'm not terribly perturbed about it, though. In these troublous times, it's even a comfort. I wouldn't want to raise my boy to shoulder a proton gun.

—Jep Powell.

\* \* \* \* \*

NAT SCHACHNER, Author of  
THE RETURN OF CIRCE

**S**TARTED a Jack-of-all-trades career by majoring in chemistry at college. Was research chemist for private manufacturing concerns and food and drug expert for the New York Board of Health. Landed in the World War in the Chemical Warfare Service, Gas and Flame Division, and managed to be one of the few who weren't carried out feet first. Decided to try law as more exciting after the Armistice, and remained fairly well put for some fifteen years. Back in 1930 wrote my first story on a bet—had never read a pulp before

that—and much to my surprise, it was accepted. The magazine was AMAZING. Liked the idea and wrote more and more until my stenographer objected. Typing manuscripts she had no time for law briefs. I decided therefore to drop the law. But even in writing I can't stay put. I alternate fantasies, detectives, etc., with such stuff as a biography of Aaron Burr, a deadly serious volume on the Medieval Universities, articles for magazines like American Mercury, etc., and am now involved in a book on Alexander Hamilton. But all along what I really wanted to be was an astronomer.—*Nat. Schachner, New York, N. Y.*

## Oscar Saves the Union!

The strangest and most thrilling adventure Oscar has had! Here's a new story of the popular little Martian detective. This time it's indians! ... the most fantastic experience of them all! Yes, and it really could happen, too! Think of it: Indians coming out of their reservation, decked in war paint, and threatening the safety of America! Ridiculous? You just read this story first, before you pass such an opinion! It's complete in the big thrill-packed September issue. Don't miss it!



**fantastic**  
ADVENTURES

SEPTEMBER  
ISSUE ON  
SALE AT ALL  
NEWSSTANDS  
JULY 18th!

# Quiz Page

The following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of things scientific. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you, and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you enjoy the stories in this magazine.

## TAKE YOUR PICK

*In this section of the quiz it's your job to select the correct answer to complete the statement before it. Score yourself 2 points for each one you get right.*

(a) The first robot was invented in—1931... 1882... 1900 ... 1928.

(b) The inventor of the first robot was—Charles H. Lindbergh... Bunson... Peter The Great... Doctor Compton... William Richards.

(c) Sound, travelling over telephone wires from San Francisco to New York, will have a speed rate of—.02 to .07 sec.... .09 to 1 sec.... 12 to .135 seconds.

(d) Colors, in cloth when wet, will appear—lighter and fainter... deeper and brighter... just the same as when dry.

(e) To gain maximum speed, an average man will have to fall—10 feet... 400 feet... 33 feet... 1000 feet... 1600 feet.

(f) The surface of water in an ordinary bucket is—slightly concave... perfectly level... slightly convex.

(g) Unofficially, the national flower of the United States is the—poppy... cactus... columbine... wild rose... violet.

(h) One of the most deadly poisonous flowers known is the—poppy... oleander... sunflower... devil's spray.

(i) The recently developed Thomas Edison dahlia has a coloring that is—royal purple... crimson... yellow... blue.

(j) The best atmospheric conditions for radio broadcasting are found in—Sweden... United States... Alaska... Bulgaria... Egypt.

(k) Probably the most primitive race in the world, from the manner in which it lives, is the—Hottentot... Malayan... Eskimo... Mongolian.

(l) The number of classes in the Indian Caste System are numerous, but the sum total is—100... 5000... 89... 4000.

(m) The time necessary for a radio message to travel around the entire world amounts to—a half minute... twenty minutes... three and one-half minutes... a fraction of a second.

(n) The Arabians pride themselves on the fluency and vastness of their racial vocabulary. An example of this might be the number of names they have for God, which amount to—twenty-five... three hundred... fifty-four... ninety-nine.

(o) The sun rotates on its axis from—North to South... East to West... West to East... South to North.

## DEPT. OF ZOOLOGY

*Now that you've breezed lightly through the above cross-quizzing, we're sure you feel in the mood to tackle a little down to earth science in the form of zoological sticklers. You don't have to pick anything this time, just give us the answer. There are 5 points for each question answered correctly.*

(a) What animal is known as a "wash-bear"?

(b) Is there any record of buffaloes ever being found in S. America?

(c) How many varieties of the uncaged tiger are found in Africa?

(d) Name at least four animals present on this continent when N. America was discovered.

(e) What color is the common coyote?

(f) What is the fastest four-footed animal?

(g) Are there any animals besides the giraffe which are unable to make a sound of any sort?

(h) Are horses native to North America in that they sprang from here?

(i) Can moles distinguish anything more than light or dark?

(j) Is the bat a bird or a mammal?

## BOTANY NEXT UP

*And what do you know about another angle of the world in which you live? Here's a study in flora. 5 points for each right answer.*

(a) Pick out the wildflowers from this group—Delphinium, Zinnia, Jacob's Ladder, Japanese Iris, Lupine.

(b) Which of these trees bear flowers?—Dogwood, Pine, Juniper, Forsythia, Balsam Fir.

(c) Which of these plants are domestic?—Century, Living Rock, Candlewood, Mexican Rose, Soapwood Tree.

(d) Select the flowers which aren't yellow in color. Trollius, Forsythia, Tuherous Water Lily, Lupine.

(e) Select the flowers which are generally almost perfectly round in shape. Peony, Zinnia, Dahlia, Orchid, Iris, Delphinium.

(Answers on page 145)

# READER'S PAGE

## SURPRISED

Sirs:

I just bought the July F.A. I haven't read the whole mag yet, but I read the "Readers Page" where I saw my letter. It is the first one I have ever written to any magazine, so I was very much surprised. I can understand why you cut so much off it. It was much too long when I sent it to you (and I bet this'll be the same).

Now that we're done with F.A., let's talk about A.S.—front cover drawing fair, colors very good; "Survivors From 9000 B.C."—not bad; "Mystery on Planetoid Ten"—could be better; "No Man's Land in Space"—seeing that it's Brackett's first story in A.S. we'll allow for (but no more like it); "Sidetrack in Time"—I don't quite understand it, so I can't put forth any opinion; "Ten Seconds From Nowhere"—punch ending; "The Invincible Crime-buster"—Gade does very well with his descriptions of other planets, etc.; back cover—same as front cover. "Artist" Magarian—get rid of him (unless he has contracts).

I like the combination of St. John and McCauley on F.A.

Robert Greenberg,  
1860 Morris Ave.,  
The Bronx,  
New York, N. Y.

*Let us know how you like Rod Ruth's cover on this issue.—Ed.*

## McCAULEY EVERY MONTH

Sirs:

This is my first letter to FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, but I assure it won't be my last if you go on giving us issues like the June and July ones.

The cover on both of the issues was superb although June had the current one beat by a mile. Please give us a cover by McCauley every month. How about Finlay the peer of all fantasy artists, a cover by him would help your circulation immensely.

Well, now to get on with the stories, I will rate only July's material. Edgar Rice Burroughs again runs off with first honors, it was a 'blood 'n thunder' yarn, but written in the inimitable Burroughs style. Good illustrations by St. John.

Ah, I see Jep Powell is back and with a grand story although it really belonged in *Amazing*. Please give Krupa more pix.

"The City Of Lost Souls" takes second place. Farley rarely, if ever, turns out a sloppy yarn.

This story screams to high heaven for a sequel, how about it? I do not like Magarian!

The remaining four tales rank in this order: "Three Terrible People," "Abner Schlap's Strange Insight," "Robots Can't Lie" and "Doorway Of Vanishing Men." Of these only Cabot's was above mediocre. And now, as a parting shot, I enter a request for less detective stories and less McGivern "humor."

Vincent Scullin,  
Hotel Traymore,  
Atlantic City, N. J.

*We are open to art work from Finlay, and we expect that he will favor us with something soon. However, his covers do not seem to have the particular brand of appeal we try to reach in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, nor is his color as vivid as we like to have. Maybe we can persuade him to try something for us, though.*

*Farley has written a sequel for the story you mention, and we have it now. It will appear soon.*

*Less detective? Our memory must be failing us. We've run only two short shorts that could be classed as featuring a super-detective hero. And less McGivern humor? You'll have an argument on your hands with quite a few readers. You are outnumbered.—Ed.*

## BEWARE!

Sirs:

A short note of warning—get rid of those half-naked females which have been appearing on F.A. lately.

The past two or three issues have the wimmin wearing clothes about as opaque as a summer breeze—and there ain't much breeze around here in summer . . .

It really must be vurry embarrassin' having every drip in the country leering and drooling all over you. Give da dames a chance.

Give the fans a chance too; how in L do you expect us to read the mag peacefully and quietly at home with covers like *that*? I tried taking it to the library but every once in a while a guy'd come over, tap me on the shoulder, and say, "Say, buddy, can I look at that a while?" You might get some readers that way, but you'll lose more real fans.

B. Ware,  
Ripon, Wis.

*You are alone too. McCauley's covers are popular. But how about the cover on this issue? Enough clothing?—Ed.*

## READING TREAT

Sirs:

I have just finished reading the May issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and it is certainly a reading treat. Your magazine is steadily improving and it is the only fantasy book I buy now. I did not like the cover very much. It was too similar to the kind of scenes that some of the cheaper books use.

The stories were all fine and entertaining. Best story of the issue by far, was "The Masterful Mind of Mortimer Meek," by William P. McGivern. It was really a hilarious story and it managed to keep up suspense as well as being very humorous. Secondly I would place "The Man Who Murdered Himself" because it really had a "punch" ending. Wilcox's story was a true fantasy and I'm still wondering about it. It was good enough to place third in my opinion. "Moons of Death" was pretty good standard story and then I would let Binder and Norman fight it out for last place. While both stories were okay they did not compare with the others you ran. Thanking you for a swell book I am,  
Edward Dusolinski,  
Chicago, Ill.

## A SANE FAN

Sirs:

With the June issue, F.A. MONTHLY is off to a good start which was surpassed only by the superb April number which boasted of such stories as "Land of the Shadow Dragons," and "The Masterful Mind of Mortimer Meek." The new Mac Girl cover is excellent, but Fuqua's in April beat it to the top.

I would rate the stories in the opposite order that a sane fan would, I guess, but you asked for it. Here's my opinion . . .

1. "Wanderer of Little Land" by Eando Binder . . . a fast moving story of fantasy by my favorite author. Who can ask for more? 2. "The Man Who Bought Mars" by Polton Cross. I am glad to see he came back after I had not seen him in the field for quite some time. 3. "Onslaught of the Druid Girls" by Ray Cummings. The author has written a practically identical yarn in an issue of another mag a few months back. 4. "Sidney, the Screwloose Robot" by William P. McGivern is pleasingly filled with humor and has a super-swell climactic punch. For fifth and last place I think there is a tie between "Amazons of a Weird Creation" by Jep Powell and John York Cabot's "Bill of Rights, 5000 A.D." Both worked their way up to a brilliant climax . . . then piff . . . the yarns were over. I was disappointed to see that Spud became a victim of amnesia, he SHOULD HAVE FOUND A WAY TO SAVE MALES!!! Cabot should have added three or four pages and told of a revolution from below and a final democracy . . . how about a sequel, anyway?

The best interior illustration in the issue was McCauley's first one for "Onslaught of the Druid

Girls." Worst of all was Magarian's; he was much better in Amazing and last issue. Sorry to see only one pic by Krupa, he's my favorite. The one for "Sidney, the Screwloose Robot" was made by him, wasn't it?

Suggestions: When you have a feature like last month's "When The Sun Turns Green" why don't you adorn it with a full page, framed illustration by Paul or Krupa, since the back cover is occupied with ad contracts? How's about a good INTERPLANETARY novel by Binder, Wilcox or Hamilton? Beside my "Big-three favorites" I would like to see tales in Amazing and Fantastic by Ross Rocklynne, Manly Wade Wellman, Nelson S. Bond (Lancelott Biggs preferably), John R. Fearn, Neil R. Jones (if he can stay away from the Durna Range), David Wright O'Brien, R. R. Winterbotham and a host of others. Lets have a cover by Krupa or Paul.

Here's wishing you all the luck in the solar system . . . and so-long till next issue.

Milton Lesser,  
2302 Ave O.,  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

*We think you rated the stories very sanely, and we thank you. Yes, Krupa illustrated the robot story.—Ed.*

## PAGING KOLNERI

Sirs:

ATTENTION MR. ARNOLD KOLNER!

You sir, have make my blood boil. Till now I have been one of those silent readers, reading all of a magazine and letting it go at that. But, when you try to get my favorite author, Mr. Burroughs, out of "FANTASTIC ADVENTURES" that is going too far. In your letter you stated that Mr. Burroughs writes good adventure stories, but as sf stories they are just tripe. May I advise you to look on the cover and look at the name of our mag. It's called "Fantastic ADVENTURES."

When this mag. first started it was definitely stated it was going to be an adventure type of sf. Mr. Burroughs type of stories fit that requirement to the well known "T". As for "Slaves of the Fish Men," there was nothing wrong at all with that story. It was a typical Burroughs story. And damn good at that (damn may be censored, but go ahead Ed.). Well, enough for Mr. Arnold Kolner.

Now let's look at this month's issue. I rate them in the following order.

Wanderer of Little Land—First, the ending was swell. How about some more of the same?

Sidney, the Screwloose Robot—Second. All the humor you can pack in one story was in that one. I'd like some more of Sidney, but the ending was so happy (for Sidney) that I'd hate to bother him.

Onslaught of the Druid Girls—OK, but it seemed to lack something. Don't ask me what though. The Man who Bought Mars—Nothing to say.



Bill Of Rights, 5000 A.D.—Short but terrific.  
 Amazons of a Weird Creation—*Shame!*

Please, Please, PLEASE let's have trimmed edges. So you'll raise the price a nickel. Cartoons, beauties, every one. Features, all swell. Mac Girl, Yippee!

Well, I think we have gotten along all right with this letter. The reason is that I rate Fantastic among the top. Please print this letter, if nothing else just the first part.

William (Bill) Feinsilber,  
 1819½ Bridge Street,  
 Los Angeles, California.

We warned you, Arnold! There are a lot more letters on our desk, saying the same thing. Burroughs, we can testify, is still the master. He has entertained more people than any man in history, and he ought to know how! The answer is, he does know.

There'll be more Little People stories, you can be sure.—Ed.

## PLAGUE

Sirs:

In all the years that I have read sf I have never seen anything happen as terrible as the "plague" sf is now going through. I am referring to Mr. Burroughs and Mr. St. John. I do not doubt for one minute that Burroughs is one of the best adventure story writers, but he just doesn't begin to click in sf. His stories seem as if he took cheap adventure stories and tried to dress them up to be sf. As far as sf is concerned, in my opinion he is lousy. If we want cheap adventure we will buy cheap 10c adventure magazines. When we buy sf or Fantasy magazines we want science fiction or fantasy not adventure stories.

Every time I pick up either *Amazing Stories* or *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* I see a lousy cover by St. John and a lousy story by Burroughs. I've been getting hotter and hotter, and now I've exploded. When the May issue of *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* came out I gave it a good look-over, gritted my teeth, held my nose, and walked away from the stand without buying it, something that I have never done since I became acquainted with *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES*.

Ah me! Before Burroughs and St. John I was always fairly bubbling over with love for *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* and *Amazing Stories*, and the only reason I didn't write because I couldn't find words good enough to express my feelings! Well, maybe I'm wrong. On the readers page I have just seen one person, Arnold Kolner of Houston, Texas, express feelings similar to mine toward Burroughs and St. John. I don't guess this letter will do much good because not enough people seem to agree with me.

Your last issue was colossal, back to its good normal self again. I haven't got a single kick about it. Hurray! But then—look at *Amazing*

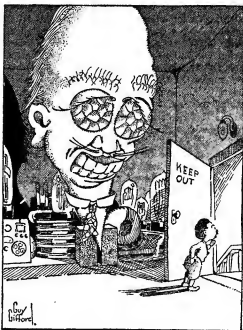
—*Pirates of Barsoom*, by Burroughs and illustrated by St. John—foeey!

Just give me another issue of *Amazing Stories* and *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* like the June issue of *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* and my next letter will be dripping with honey.

Wilfred C. Fagot,  
 530 S. Solomon St.,  
 New Orleans, La.

Well, here it is again. Not your objection to Burroughs, but to adventure. Primarily you make your groundwork for your argument insecure when you call this magazine a science fiction magazine. It is definitely, positively, and completely not. It is fantasy. If it has held a gradually disappearing tinge of the scientific, it is because we've had hard work developing a policy (which is not a hackneyed set of rules) that would produce real fantasy for us. You must know that writers like to write what they can readily sell, and fantasy is not readily salable. Thus, we have to wheedle them into writing fantasy—and that means good fantasy. Just a rush job won't suit us, as a general rule, because authors don't do their best work on something they aren't "hot" to do. So, you must change your opinion of *Fantastic Adventures*. It is just what its title implies, and what we sell to you, its reader. You buy it expecting to find science fiction. Why? It doesn't advertise that kind of fiction. It advertises fantasy-adventure.

You yourself admit Burroughs is good. Well,



"Mal That man from the fourth dimension is here again!"

he certainly is fantasy, and why sneer at exciting, adventurous fantasy? What kind of a story would it be without action, movement, plot, drama, development, etc.?

But at the same time, you must admit, we cater to you too, and give you, in alternate issues, a full book of exactly what you want. Why not give your fellow reader a break too? HE likes Burroughs, and fantasy.—Ed.

## REMARKABLE IMPROVEMENT

Sirs:

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is showing remarkable improvement of late.

This is probably the best issue that you have so far featured and you are to be sincerely congratulated upon it. McCauley deserves all of the praise in the world for his wonderful cover; it was superb. Such color, such magnificence, such splendor . . . I wish to say that there can be no doubt that he is the best cover artist whom you have. Whenever it is necessary to use another artist, please make it Allen St. John as he is the only artist capable of comparison with H.W. Also, please try to keep as little printing on the covers as possible so that their beauty will not be spoiled.

As to the features, "The Editor's Notebook" is fine and try to get many more of the really fantastic things. Your cartoons are swell, so need I say more? Yes, I need to say more, for you need more cartoons. "Fantastic Facts" are fair, but make them more fantastic. "It Can't be Done" was quite good; "Introducing the Author" is unsurpassable for interest. However, on this latter point I have a complaint to make. After all of these introductions, very little is actually learned about the authors—they spin swell yarns or tell about their relatives, or something like that, but never give the low-down on themselves. YANK THE QUIZ PAGE! MORE DRIVE!! And, most important, *double the Reader's Page!!*

Ah! Now to tear into the stories! If a fellow was ever disappointed, it was in "Onslaught of the Druid Girls." The story starts out in fine Cummings style, then gradually works into a bunch of bunk "thud and blunder" gore. The ending was all that saved the story for it was a fitting finish.

Then came pure delight with "Wanderer of Little Land" by Eando Binder which was a truly fitting sequel to the first story, but better.

Then "The Man Who Bought Mars" by Polton Cross. Phee-yew; a stinkeroo. "Amazons of a Weird Creation" by J. P. wasn't bad, and could be rated as fairly good. John York Cabot's "Bill of Rights, 5,000 A.D." was marvelous for a mere thousand words or so. This Cabot fellow seems to be getting the knack of short-shorts down pat. More please!

William P. McGivern scores again! This is one fellow who can turn out humor and turn it out

consistently grand. It isn't slap-stick blooney, but truly good wit.

Joe J. Fortier,  
1836 39th Avenue,  
Oakland, California.

Many thanks for your fine letter. We had to cut it down materially, because it was so long, but you'll pardon us for that. You make us blush with your unstinted praise.—Ed.

## RESUMÉ

Sirs:

Since I've saved FANTASTIC from the start, I compared the latest (June) issue with the first issue of FANTASTIC, that came out way back in May, '39.

Cover: The June issue has it way over the first, two years ago. As you predicted, the "Mac Girl" has won a lot of followers, and in this cover, riding through the sky, Valkyrie-like, she got me. I like the "dishabille."

Stories: The best one in your first issue was "The Mummy Of Ret-Seh," by Verrill. The best in the June issue was "Onslaught Of The Druid Girls," by Cummings. Frankly, I did lean a bit toward the "Mummy" story.

Illustrations: The best was Krupa's from "The Mummy Of Ret-Seh." I know that some people didn't like the scanty costume, but that's all the Egyptian maids did wear, unless it was a long, simple gown, that extended from their neck to their ankles, and was perfectly transparent.

As a whole, your mags are tops. It seems that I am forgetting *Amazing*, but I couldn't say any nicer things than what have been said about it already. People seem to think that FANTASTIC is just a sort of extra that isn't as important as *Amazing*, and I disagree. That's why all this letter is devoted to FANTASTIC.

I would like to see a few more tales of strange, hidden cities, and of a few persons like Kirk, The Wanderer, or Hok, The Caveman.

There is a great deal of subject matter in the stories of Atlantis, Mu, and the lost civilization of the Khymers, who built Angkor-Vat, and then suddenly vanished.

The strange glamour of fantastic, sprawling cities; the barbaric beauty of temples, and of many lovely priestesses dancing before a huge terrifying staute, towering before them in the gloom of that dark altar; and the sight of slim carven ships, with gold-yellow sails, and oars flashing in the sun; that's what you should give us. Then I will be in a reader's heaven. I warn you that, if I don't see some stories like that, I'm gonna sit right down, and write a story, send it in, and see if it gets published.

The general art work is good. Krupa, Fuqua, and Sewell are swell, and so is St. John. I like Jay Jackson. Your new artist, Magarian, is promising, and with that close, involved detail, might become another Finlay, but I'd like to see

some more work, before my decision is complete. His technique is good, but if he did any research into the dress and customs of the Khymers, he would see that the dress of "Mera" in that story "Lost Treasure of Angkor" was a bit off the idea. I sketched off a picture, copied from the wall inscriptions and you will find it enclosed.

Is there actually such a city as was described—The Hidden City 40 miles northeast of Angkor, (June, P. 64).

Also I wanted to know the details of a story I read about three years ago, in a newspaper. The article said that in December 1938, a fishing boat caught a fish (Coelacanth) that was supposed to have been extinct for 50 million years. I think this happened off Africa.

A Fantastic Fan  
Bridgeport, Conn.

*Apparently you like the Mac Girl. Well, who wouldn't! Your idea of what type story we would run is very interesting, and instructive. Thanks for going to so much trouble to build up an example of the glamor and adventure you crave. Your drawing can't be reproduced here, but we assure the readers that it amazed us. It was quite well done—and Krupa will be jealous. You certainly exceeded him in glamor! Yes, there is a Hidden City. It was to have been explored by the French this year, but the war has ended all that. The story you read about the fish was true. Scientists were very much interested, because it demonstrates that many strange things exist in the ocean's depths.—Ed.*

### 100% PERFECT

Sirs:

In your last two issues you have been 100% perfect. I rate your June issue as follows:

"Wanderer of Little Land"—excellent. I think Mr. Binder has something there, and I wish he would write many more stories on the wanderer.

"Sidney, the Screwloose Robot," "The Man Who Bought Mars," and "Amazons of a Weird Creation" were also very good.

"Onslaught of the Druid Girls" and "Bill of Rights, 5,000 A.D." were much too common, and many stories are almost the same as they were.

The cover, excellent. Until I started reading your mag I thought that all fantasy fiction magazine covers should be put on horror mags.

Dale Rostomily,  
906-22 Ave., S. E.,  
Minneapolis, Minn.

### 100% AGAIN!—BUT . . .

Sirs:

In my humble opinion the June issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES stunk. There was only one good story in this issue. I mean Binder's "Wanderer of Little Land." The rest of the stories were lousy. The worst stories of the issue were "Sidney, the Screwloose Robot" (McGivern, the

screwloose author (?)) and "Bill of Rights, 5,000 A.D."

I also think you have too many features in your rag. Get rid of everything except Introducing the Author and the Reader's Page.

In Introducing the Author let's have some real biographies and less slop like that was written for this department by David V. Reed in May.

I want some real fantasy. I don't mean the junk you give us, I mean real fantasy like those classics written by Merritt, Hall, Flint, England, etc., years ago.

And when you give us fantasy, give us a real fantasy artist to illustrate the story. Yes, I mean Virgil Finlay. Your authors can't write and your illustrators can't draw.

You can see from this letter that I think FANTASTIC ADVENTURES could stand a h—l of a lot of improvement.

A. L. Schwartz,  
229 Washington St.,  
Dorchester, Mass.

*We intend to keep right on improving FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, and by golly, we'll make you come around to our way of thinking if we have to publish Omar Khayyam in Neanderthal pictographs! Come out from under, Mr. Schwartz, we know you're kidding us. You read us, don't you?—Ed.*

### MISSING ELEMENTS

Sirs:

I have been taking FANTASTIC ADVENTURES since



"Just think, Phoebe darling, only forty more years to Earth and the minister."

it first appeared on the newsstands, and it still is my favorite science fiction magazine.

I want to call something to your attention, however. In presenting Romance of the Elements you have missed several elements: alabamine, actinium, and bromine. I refer you to Page 719 of the 1941 World Almanac.

D. F. H.,  
Omaha, Nebr.

*No, we aren't going to miss those elements. They are to appear soon. As for Bromine, an enthusiastic fan added that to his private collection during a visit to our offices, and since we've been unable to locate it, or coax it away from his treasure chest long enough to make a plate of it, we've had it done over. The fan who has it may confess, if he wishes; we aren't mad at him. We're rather flattered that our illustrations are so valued as keepsakes!—Ed.*

#### EARL BINDER

Sirs:

I have just read the discussions of the June issue of *Amazing Stories*. I am sorry to hear that Earl Binder does not write any more. Could you please tell me why?

The stories had good titles and good authors. "Black Pirates of Barsoom" was excellent. "Homer Higginbottom, Rain Maker" ranked next. The

other stories were very good too. Paul's illustrations on the back covers are wonderful. But what will he do when he runs out of cities?

I have purchased your sister magazine, *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES*, for the first time. From now on I'll get it always. The stories of this publication are good too.

Mortimer Meek was humorous and exciting. "Invisible Robinhood" was good too. Next I will buy *Popular Photography*. It seems to be very good. Believe it or not, the only books or rather magazines I get are Ziff-Davis'.

Harold Kleemeyer,  
7103 69th St.,  
Glendale, N. Y.

*Earl Binder, the "E" half of E and O, never did the writing. Otto did that, and Earl plotted. Now Otto does it all, but retains the original name, Eando. Paul, when he runs out of cities, has a new series awaiting his facile brush. We are glad to see that you have faith in the Ziff-Davis reputation. We are rather proud of it too, in a modest way, because we want to give you the best books possible.—Ed.*

#### FAVORITE STORIES

Sirs:

I started reading *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* when it first appeared on the stands. I also began to read

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COMPLETE DETAILS IN THE JULY

# Popular Photography

NOW ON SALE AT ALL NEWSSTANDS AND CAMERA STORES!

*Amazing Stories* when John Carter appeared in January.

I've written a list of the stories I've enjoyed most and also a list of characters I'd like to appear in sequels.

"John Carter and the Giant of Mars"

Burroughs never fails.

"Martian and Troglodyte"

Appeared in early *Amazing*. Get Neil R. Jones to write a sequel.

"Jongor of Lost Land"

Deserves a sequel.

"Empress of Mars"

Entertaining Burroughs style.

"The Invisible Robinhood"

Binder's only adult effort.

"Adventure in Lemuria"

More about Kirk!

"City Under the Sea"

Schachner is good at this type of science.

"Horror Out of Carthage"

Hamilton should forget space ships.

"Into Another Dimension"

Deserves a sequel.

"Prince of Mars Returns"

Please reprint early Buck Rogers tales for the sake of us who have never had the opportunity to read them.

"Amazon Fights Again"

Best of Amazon series. How about her children?

"Adam Link in the Past"

Reminds me of Burroughs' style.

If possible I hope you can persuade Burroughs to write more tales about Tanar of Pellucidar and Nu of the Niocene.

James Daley,  
6 Bearse Ave.,  
Dorchester, Mass.

*Tanar of Pellucidar will begin appearing in a series of complete novels in Amazing Stories in the December 1941 issue.—Ed.*

## LIKES CUMMINGS

Sirs:

That June ish looks fine. The cover doesn't exactly repel. All your other readers will be raving over the "Mac" girl, so no use for me to join in too—just a drop in the bucket.

But I really liked the cover, and the Aerite bird had a wistful expression on his face . . . stars gleaming behind . . . and the expression on the girl's face is one of the best. I love paintings like this—a big improvement over the mused-up heroine strapped to the gleaming electrode while the mad scientist throws the switch.

I agree, "Onslaught of the Druid Girls" was Cummings' best, though "Wanderer of Little Land" sorta edged it out of first place in my opinion.

All your features scattered through the book are appreciated.

Raymond Washington, Jr.,  
Live Oak, Fla.

## LIVE DANGEROUSLY

---said Nietzsche, Philosopher



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Let me show you as I have shown thousands. Send stamped envelope.

**FRANK ZIKEVICH**

**South Mountain Franklin County, Pa.**

"... AND YOW!"

Sirs:

Just read your magazine **FANTASTIC ADVENTURES**, and yow! What a kick! It is without doubt the best magazine I have ever read of this type. Every adventure a "great slam." How do you pack so much grand reading in one issue?

Keep the magazine small; the size is much easier to handle than the large size ones.

Why not have a quarterly? It ought to be a sure fire hit.

Marianne Ferguson,  
20 S. Buffum St.,  
Worcester, Mass.

*We'll do some thinking about your suggestion. Many thanks for your compliments. We appreciate them deeply.—Ed.*

### A NEW READER

Sirs:

I do not read magazines very often, because I like books better. The other day at a friend's house, I picked up a copy of your January magazine. I glanced at it, and read a few pages. I became very interested in it, and took it home. I have read every story in it, and I have become a fan of yours.

I thought D. W. O'Brien's *The Floating Robot* was a very thrilling story, one of the best stories I have ever read in a magazine. I enjoyed *The Golden Amazon Returns*, *The Dynamouse*, *The Horse That Talked*, and *The Vanishing Witnesses*. The only story which I did not enjoy was *Dr. Kelton—Body Snatcher*. Perhaps that was because it was so short, just ten pages.

I like humor in your stories, too, and *The Dynamouse* was an exceptionally good story.

I have found out your magazine comes out once every two months. Why? Surely this is too long. Why not once each month, or even twice?

Edward H. Holt,  
1409 W. 6th,  
Little Rock, Ark.

*Wrong! FANTASTIC ADVENTURES comes out each month! We began monthly publication with the May issue. And we're glad to welcome you as a new and steady reader. Write us again. We like to know what you think of us.—Ed.*

### "FLOATING ROBOT" BEST

Sirs:

I have just completed your January issue of **FANTASTIC ADVENTURES**. I have been reading the magazine for several issues, all being very interesting and exciting. Your last issue being no exception. I think the story of "The Floating Robot" being by far the best in months.

What I really wrote to you about was the several paragraphs in "The Floating Robot" about "Radio Hams." This really burned me up! The first thing I saw (or read) was the operator going on the air drunk. I myself have never heard of one



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SPECIALTY EXPOSE

Kansas City, Mo.

## READER'S PAGE

(Concluded from page 143)

why Dash Dashiell came out as twins. This is something else I'd like you to answer.

I thought perhaps that you would have a sequel to "Three Eyes in the Dark" in this issue, but you didn't. "Three Eyes" is one of the best stories that I have read, and I sure would enjoy reading another one like it.

Most of your readers seem to be crazy about Magarian, but I don't think that his drawing is particularly wonderful. Far from it, they are only average in my opinion, and several of my friends think so too. The best news that I have heard in a long while is your announcement of

a new contest in the August issue. I probably won't win it, but it will be a lot of fun trying to do so.

When are you going to give us another Don Wilcox story? He has never, in my opinion, written anything as good as "When the Moon Died" and "The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years." Give us more by Wilcox, but for Heaven's sake, nothing like that thing "The Secret of the Stone Doll."

Now to Oscar. The first Oscar story was exceptionally good, but when he stoops to zombies, it is just too much. Do you think you could whip up a time-travel story with Oscar in it? I know that I would enjoy such a story, though I can't speak for the rest of your readers.

Stories like "Abner Schlap's Strange Insight" would be much better if the characters in them wouldn't have such utterly ridiculous names, such as Snipe, Droope, Schlap, and Creepers. These names only serve to make the story ridiculous, and not humorous.

But to sum up in general, I would say—Stories, all considered together, good. Inside illustrations—good. Cover, superb! Such a combination of J. Allen St. John and the Mac Girl (the Pretty of the Pulp) should be repeated, and often!

DON HOWELL,  
3113 Riverside Ave.,  
Jacksonville, Fla.

Your questions are easy to answer. First, the Fire Goddess was an Earth girl, from Brooklyn. She disappeared, somehow, and turned up many years later, dead, but not a corpse for more than a few hours. Burroughs infers a whole novel is being written about her, and naturally we can't tell that story here. But she traveled through space, met Carson of Venus, saved his life, and met her own death, at the hands of the high priest, and was hurled back to Earth by the same means by which she was snatched. Dashiell came out as twins because the apparatus failed to reassemble him completely the first time. Thus, when the operation was repeated, there was a duplication. Wilcox, you'll note, is in this issue. And Oscar will return next month in a "time" yarn!—Ed.

## COMING NEXT MONTH

### Mystery of the Martian Pendulum

By Thornton Ayre and A. R. Steber  
The Year's Best Interplanetary!

## CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

Edward H. Holt, 1409 W. 6, Little Rock, Ark., would like to play chess by mail with residents of the U.S.A. or Canada . . . Frank McCourt, 516 W. 140th St., New York City, has current SF and



fan magazines which he would like to exchange with fans who can call evenings . . . Fred Heinrich, 152 W. 62nd St., New York City, would like female pen pals, 16 to 18, in his city . . . Thomas McIntosh, 1210 N. 19th St., Superior, Wisc., has back issues of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES for sale . . . Richard L. Hiatt, 1410 1/2 Gallia Ave., Portsmouth, O., would like correspondents in Central and South America, Philippines and Asia, interested in stamp collecting, view card collecting and science fiction; would like to trade "Warlord of Mars" for "After Worlds Collide," or Burroughs' stories . . . Joe J. Fortier, 1836 39th Ave., Oakland, Calif., Andover 2559, wishes to announce the operation of "The Golden Gate Futurians" fan club . . . M. H. Kritzhger, 4748 N. Crawford Ave., Chicago, Ill., has several hundred AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and miscellaneous SF magazines, in good condition with both covers, for sale; send for list . . . Dick Waite, Rural Route No. 1, wishes to change his address from Banker, N.Y. to Barker, N.Y. . . . Frank Robinson, 6636 S. Sacramento, Chicago, Ill., wishes to trade SF magazines and wants information about joining the Chicago Science Fiction League; would also like to hear from Chicago fans . . . Fred Heinrich (address above), wants the address of a Manhattan science fiction club . . . Claude Held, 494 Carlton St., Buffalo, N.Y., will trade SF magazines for U.S.A. and British North America stamps; also wants to trade stamps with collectors in Canada, etc. . . . Edwin Rothhouse, 1727 Cheltenham Pl., Philadelphia, Pa., wishes foreign pen pals and will send all correspondents at least one SF magazine . . . Robert Richel, 424 Paxton St., Paterson, N.J., wishes correspondents, preferably female, 14 to 17; will reply immediately . . . Stanley Werbin, 589 Blake Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y., is confined to bed and is anxious to correspond with fans . . . Stanley Arnold, 600 W. Clinton St., Frankfurt, Ind., wishes to purchase SF and fantasy magazines or books and early issues of AMAZING STORIES . . . Osmond G. A. Salmon, c/o The Modern Optical Co., 122 Tower St., Kingston, Jamaica, B.W.I., needs a great number of back issues of AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES; collectors: communicate with him . . . Joseph Dorn, 1314 Franklin St., Northside, Pittsburgh, Pa., will sell to the highest bidder rare books of Burroughs'; also wishes to correspond with those interested in chemistry, physics, etc., and will trade stamps for magazines and books (SF only) . . . John Ah Rin, Waiakea Mill, Hilo, Hawaii, 22 yrs., wants female correspondents on the mainland; will reply promptly . . . Ronald Clyne, 2112 W. Ainslie St., Chicago, Ill., is desirous of obtaining A. Merritt's books in good condition, the "Skylark" series, and Francis Stevens' books . . . Anyone wishing to swap matches with many or few people, for all types, write to International Match Club, 780 Edgewood Ave., New Haven, Conn., Robert H. Gray, President . . . Thomas Brackett, Box 214, Winnshoro, La., would like to hear from SF fans in Louisiana interested in forming a SF Society

. . . Lucas Da Silveira, Salvo Bldg., Montevideo, Uruguay, 34 yrs., architect, wishes to correspond with girls or ladies . . . Mary G. Byers, c/o H. Chaney, Bird Rd., RFD 5, Springfield, O., wants to dispose of a SF collection . . . Thomas E. Townsend, 1524 W. 28th St., Little Rock, Ark., will reply promptly to all those interested in collecting and exchanging picture post cards . . . George Gardner Barker, Halfway Pond, Buzzards Bay Post Office, Mass., would like to obtain the "Skylark" series . . . Simpson M. Ritter, 1160 Simpson St., New York City, has a large collection of first edition magazines to trade for historical and biographical books; also 1940 and 1941 SF magazines for late 1941 copies . . . Alfred Edward Maxwell, 118 W. Madison St., Opelousas, La., needs short stories, science or SF articles, poems, cartoons, etc., for STAFANITE . . . Ruth Barron, 232 Beach 132 St., Rockaway, N.Y., wants to hear from male correspondents, 19 to 25, interested in classical music, dancing and fantastic fiction; those in Service (foreign especially) are most welcome . . . Edgar Schlossberg, 1674 Macombs Rd., Bronx, N.Y., wants to hear from those interested in joining a SF organization, living in New York City and between 13 and 17; call LU-7-2467 . . . Stanley Amsiejus, R.F.D. 1, Pelham, N.H., wishes to buy and sell various magazines . . . Frank Hoffmann, Pascal Hotel, Peoria, Ill., would like to make friends through the mail . . . Walter Nemunis, 101-56 115th St., Richmond Hill, N.Y., wants to hear from those interested in starting a club . . . F. R. Stofer, 237 Baker Hall, O.S.U., and R. J. Owens, 239 Baker Hall, O.S.U., Columbus, O., wish to hear from those interested in travel, athletics, science, etc.; they prefer young ladies, but will reply to all letters . . . Chester Hoey, 301 6th Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y., will trade a chemistry set and harmonica for a professional snare drum . . .

## QUIZ ANSWERS

(Quiz on page 134)

### Take Your Pick

(a) 1928. (b) William Richards. (c) .02 to .07 sec. (d) deeper and brighter. (e) 1600 feet. (f) slightly concave. (g) wild rose. (h) oleander. (i) royal purple. (j) Sweden. (k) Hottentot. (l) 4000. (m) fraction of a second. (n) ninety-nine. (o) W. to E.

### Department of Zoology

(a) the raccoon. (b) no. (c) none. (d) bear, wolf, puma, moose, etc. (e) brown or tan. (f) cheetah. (g) none. (h) no. (i) no. (j) a mammal.

### Botany Next Up

(a) Jacob's Ladder, Lupine. (b) Forsythia, Dogwood. (c) None. (d) Tuberous Water Lily, Lupine. (e) Peony, Zinnia, Dahlia.

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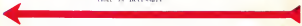
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